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how to

teach business english

Contents

Introduction

Who is this book for?

How to Teach Business English has been written for anyone involved in the teaching of business English, including teachers, materials writers, and course designers, as well as language consultants and trainers working in companies. Newcomers to business English will find the book particularly relevant, but those with more experience should find that the book offers fresh insights into key issues.

What is this book about?

The use of English as the language for business is increasingly widespread, and more and more teachers are being asked to teach it. Business English teaching is not just about what happens in the classroom; it covers a huge variety of activities, such as dealing with sponsors, gathering information in order to design a course or choose materials, and working in a wide and varied range of contexts. This book is designed to offer practical advice to anyone involved in business English teaching, and to act as a guide to some of the theoretical developments that affect the way business teachers operate.

Chapter 1 considers the people involved in learning and teaching business English and the contexts in which it takes place; it contains an overview of what makes teaching business English special. Chapter 2 looks at how to gather information about specific learning and business needs before planning a course. Chapters 3 and 4 go on to cover course design and materials development, areas which the business English teacher needs to deal with.

The next two chapters deal with the communication skills common in business English teaching. Chapter 5 examines speaking skills, such as socializing, small talk, presentations, negotiations, and meetings, while Chapter 6 deals with teaching written skills such as letter writing, contracts, reports, CVs, agendas, minutes, and writing for the Internet. Chapter 7 examines some of the issues raised by distance learning (when teacher and learner are separated by space and perhaps by time), and discusses various options which are available to the teacher.

Intercultural training is increasingly being seen as part and parcel of the business English teacher's job, and this is dealt with in Chapter 8. Finally, Chapter 9 considers issues of course evaluation, looking at it from the different perspectives of the learner, the teacher, and the company investing in the training.

Suggested classroom activities are signalled by this icon .

The Task File consists of photocopiable sheets relevant to each chapter. They can be used for individual study and reflection, or for discussion and review in a training context. A Task File Key, with guideline answers, is provided. Additional chapter-related notes and further reading suggestions are provided in an appendix.

Author's acknowledgements

1 What is special about business English?

- **The business English learner**
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The business English learner

Every day millions of people all over the world use English in their business activities. Business is about buying and selling or, more broadly, exchanging and exploiting resources and capabilities. It uses the language of commerce, of finance, of industry, of providing goods and services. It is about people coming together to accomplish things they could not do as individuals. It is about design and innovation, traditions and values, about the exciting and the mundane. It is about cooperation, negotiation, and conflict. It is about persuading and understanding, power and control, explaining and finding solutions to problems. In short, business English is communication with other people within a specific context.

What do people want when they decide to study business English? For some it is a necessary part of their job. For others it is an investment which brings status and possibly financial reward. Some people have very specific needs, and some people just want their English to get better. Some people may be near the end of their working lives, and others may just be starting a new job, or career, or project. Despite this wide variety, it is possible to group learners together in generally accepted categories:

According to experience

Pre-experienced learners have little or no experience of the business world. Typically, they are learning business English because they intend to follow a business career; they may be university students, for example, or even secondary school students. Because of their lack of experience they will often need the teacher to provide a window on the business world. *Job-experienced* learners know a lot about their business and their own jobs, and often have very precise notions about why they need business English. In contrast to pre-experienced learners, they do not need or expect the teacher to help them understand the world of business. A third category, which might be called *general business-experienced*, falls somewhere between the two. It comprises learners who may already have a certain amount of

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work experience, but who are learning English in order to move into a new job, or for a specific purpose.

According to level in the organization's hierarchy

Very often learners at different levels in a company have different approaches to business English learning. Senior managers, for example, may wish to focus on specific skills like presenting or negotiating, or may wish to have 1-to-1 lessons because of their status within an organization, whereas more junior staff may not have such precise needs, or may not be able to influence how their training is managed. So a company might arrange separate classes for senior managers and other sessions for clerical staff.

According to national culture

Different national cultures have different traditions and values regarding training and education. Sometimes learners need to be split into different groups in order to cope with this. A private language school in, say, the UK, the US, or New Zealand, might elect to teach separately its Asian and Hispanic learners, whose different styles of communication might otherwise interfere with the learning process.

According to need

Some learners have very specific needs which they want the teacher to help with; for example, they may be about to join an international project team, or need help answering a company telephone hotline, or want to describe their company's products to a new customer. Other learners have a general aim to improve their English because it seems the right thing to do, and they need a less focused course. A third category might be learners with particular roles or functions, such as secretaries, accountants, or technicians. They may work in different firms, but share job characteristics they can all identify with.

According to language level

Sometimes learners are grouped together because they have roughly the same language proficiency. So learners might be called 'beginners', or 'advanced', or 'level three', depending on how well they can pass a test or fit in with a set of predetermined criteria.

Business English teaching contexts

Business English teachers normally work within one or more of the following teaching contexts:

Education institute

Young adults are typically taught in an institutional education environment, such as a school, university, or apprenticeship scheme. If they are in a tertiary education environment, it could be that the teaching will require a lot of work with written texts, and perhaps the preparation of oral or written assignments so that grades can be given. Sometimes such assignments bear little or no relationship to future working contexts, but are heavily influenced by the needs and traditions of the educational establishment. In some cases, the students will also attend other (non-language) classes in English.

Learners in such institutes normally start with certain expectations or feelings about the class. They may expect the teacher to be an expert on the business world as well as a language expert (he or she may be neither). They may feel that learning English is not as high a priority as other subjects. And the classes, often relatively large, may contain learners with widely disparate language levels and skills. Because such groups usually do not know exactly how they will be using their English in future, it can be difficult to focus on specific target needs. The great advantage, of course, is that it is often easier for teachers to cover areas which may not be possible in a more constrained in-company group.

Private language school

Private language schools exist in most major cities of the world. Sometimes they are part of franchises or chains, and sometimes they are small organizations run by one or two people. The teaching may take place in the school's own premises, or the teacher may be expected to travel to the customer's location. The customers may be anything from private individuals trying to improve their English in order to apply for a job, right up to large corporations with employees all over the world. In some countries, schools are required (or can volunteer) to submit to outside inspection; such schemes are designed to ensure that certain standards are maintained. Teachers planning to work in language schools are well advised to find out about pay and conditions before they sign a contract.

In-company

In-company teaching involves working at the client's premises, and can vary from a couple of hours a week to a full-time job. It offers a very different experience from working in an educational establishment, for at least two reasons: the learners are not only operating in their workplace already, but they will often have a much better idea of why they need English.

Teachers who work full-time in a company will get to know the company's needs very well. They will normally be given their own training room (as opposed to the use of an empty office or meeting room), and will also have access to resources such as the company intranet. Sometimes the trainer will be invited to attend meetings, do work shadowing (accompanying an employee doing their normal job, and giving feedback as necessary), or help out with written documents. After a few years, the trainer can become indispensable to a company, even saving money: for example, one trainer designed content-based training which reduced the employees' induction time (new employees learned about their new company in English).

In-company trainers are normally required to do many other tasks besides teach. Administration is particularly important as there is often no one else to do it for them. Rooms need to be booked, stationery ordered, fire practices need to be attended, and so on. One of the tasks of the in-company teacher is to walk about and meet people in all parts of the organization; this gives the teacher a feel for what is going on inside the

company, and it also ensures that people in the company are aware of the teacher's presence. The teacher should maintain an intranet presence if possible, giving times and locations of classes, information about learning English possibilities, and useful links.

In-company teachers are normally expected to use materials that are relevant to the company. This can be hard at first, as the new teacher normally does not have such a bank of resources available, but one will soon build up. The new teacher is advised not to overload his or her teaching schedule. There is usually much else to do, and many distractions (*Teacher, can you just help me with this letter?*, *Teacher, can you do a quick placement test on these new job interviewees?*, and the like), so 20 hours of scheduled teaching is probably realistic (assuming a 40-hour working week).

1-to-1

1-to-1 (private lessons with one teacher and one student) is quite a common arrangement in business English teaching. It can involve preparing a learner for a specific project, coaching over a longer period, checking or helping with presentations, correspondence, reports, and so on. Sometimes a person joins a company without sufficient language skills, and needs to be brought up to speed very fast. Sometimes a learner at a management level prefers the idea of 1-to-1. 1-to-1 learners are normal highly motivated (they would not be prepared to find the time or pay the money otherwise).

Normally a teacher manages a group of people, whereas in a 1-to-1 situation, not only is the teacher able to focus entirely on the learner's needs, but the learner also becomes the main resource. The teacher's task is to reformulate the learner's language, working towards an improved version, either orally or in written form. It is not merely about focusing on grammatical or lexical errors, although these should be addressed. For example, let's consider the case of a learner who wants to give a presentation and who starts with an introduction, offering an initial attempt at it. The teacher and student work together to reformulate it by, in effect, going over the whole introduction and improving it. This may mean correcting some mistakes, but it might also mean starting from scratch about what to include in an introduction (see Chapter 5 for more about presentations training). This focus on a single learner and his or her language is what makes 1-to-1 teaching so different. Sometimes learners expect the teacher to provide the content, largely because they have no other experience, but this is rarely the most effective way to do 1-to-1 teaching.

The new teacher can easily fall into the trap of assuming that the learner wants maximum effort and input (after all, 1-to-1 learners may be very important people who have paid a lot of money for the course). However, 1-to-1 learning is already intensive enough, and such keenness may add to a stressful situation. Teachers are well advised to remember the value of silence, and the need to vary the pace and intensity of activities. In some cases, the teacher and learner strike up a personal relationship, or build a special rapport with each other. A 1-to-1 situation is far less contrived than a classroom situation, and it can feel much more like real communication.

The business English teacher

What about the teacher? In most other fields of teaching the teacher knows more about the subject than the learner, but in business English the relationship can be more symbiotic: the teacher knows about language and communication, but the learner often knows more about the job and its content. Business English teachers need to be able to make informed decisions about language and language learning. They also need credibility, professionalism, and an awareness of the business world. Above all, they must be able to adapt to a particular teaching context and be willing, themselves, to learn.

Within the field of business English, many teachers call themselves trainers, coaches, or even consultants. There are very good reasons for this.

Teacher as trainer

The business English teacher works in the world of business, where trainers are common. There is a fundamental difference in approach: a teacher is traditionally seen as someone whose task is to educate someone so that they can have more chance at succeeding in life (the exact objectives may be fairly loose). A trainer, on the other hand, is someone who is required to change a person's behaviour or ability so that they can do a specific job. Training is job-oriented, while teaching is person-oriented. Thus, whereas a language teacher is helping a student to learn a language for a variety of (often unspecified) purposes, a trainer is training them to behave – both linguistically and pragmatically – in a certain way.

Teacher as coach

A coach is someone who can help the learner take advantage of the learning opportunities in their own working environment. It involves helping the learner to better understand his or her own strengths and weaknesses, and plan accordingly. This is related to the concept of **learner autonomy**, where the learner takes full responsibility for his or her learning.

Teacher as consultant

A consultant is an expert who is brought in because his or her skills or know-how are not available in the organization. In business English, this expertise can cover a wide area; it may include the ability to analyse communication and communication needs, it may require the teacher to recommend a training supplier, or it may involve the teacher negotiating with a number of hotels to choose the best location for a course, for example. Many freelance teachers operate as consultants; they market themselves in order to gain access to a potential client, they discuss contracts, they carry out needs analysis, they interact not only with the learners, but also with those who make the decision to pay for language training services, and they evaluate training delivery and outcomes. They are often in a privileged position, in that they may well be the only person in a company with direct and open access to everyone at every level.

Language in context

The language of business English includes what some people might call *everyday English*. Consider the following exchanges:

> **A:** Excuse me.
> **B:** Hi. Can I help you?
> **A:** I hope so. I'm looking for room 235. Mr Jenkin's office.
> **B:** Yes, of course. It's just round the corner, over there.
>
> ---
>
> **A:** What d'you think?
> **B:** Yes, alright.
> **A:** By Friday?
> **B:** I said yes, ok?

Both these exchanges could be described as everyday English. The first exchange could take place within the context of visiting the headteacher at a school, for example, and the second could be between husband and wife discussing when the painting of the garage is to start. But if they are used by a business person within a **business context**, they become business English. So the first exchange might be a business person visiting a supplier's factory, and the second might be two colleagues discussing an important deadline.

But some groups of people use language in other ways too, ways that are not as familiar to outsiders. They use specialist words to make communication, within the group, easier and more efficient. Every profession does this (indeed, one defining feature of a profession is that it has its own linguistic identity). People use specific language to communicate in specific contexts. Business communities are no different. Accountants use the language of accounting (*specific lexis*) to talk about accounting matters (*specific context*). Sales engineers use specific language to discuss their product specifications with their customers. These are both business communities, but they probably wouldn't understand each other's specialist vocabulary. **English for Specific Purposes** (ESP) is a term often used to describe language that is inaccessible to people who are not members of a particular **language community**. Here are some examples:

> Can we talk about gearing after lunch? I'm hungry. (in accounting)
> We've had some SF_6 leakage. (in the power industry)
> Maybe we need to revisit the escalation clause? (in real estate)
> It's OTC. (*over the counter*, in e.g. retail pharmaceuticals)

There is also language which is clearly business English, but which can be understood by most proficient users of English. Consider the following:

> Sales have fluctuated since we introduced the new sales strategy.
> The team is responsible for the China project.
> Has everybody had a look at the minutes?
> They've terminated the contract.

This is sometimes described as **general business English**, and is the sort of English found in general business English coursebooks or in business magazines.

So, business English is an umbrella term for a mixture of general everyday English, general business English, and ESP. It is not limited to words or phrases that only appear in some special business world. For example, a quick glance at the language of advertising soon shows a wonderful variety of metaphorical language, such as the health drink with *more muscle*. And popular business books borrow from a wide variety of literary sources, including *Winnie-the-Pooh* and Shakespeare.

Yet there are some other things which make business English distinctive. Firstly, business people do a variety of things with language; they socialize, predict, analyse, negotiate, buy, write, persuade, compromise, telephone, compete, market, sell, produce, interview, train, travel, plan, investigate, deal, advertise, explain ... the list is endless. These are done in a specific business **context**, and for business **aims**. But skill in using business English is not limited to the words and language used. Presenters use certain techniques to get their message across. So do negotiators. So do telephone operators. Business English users need to know the words, but they also need the skills in order to do their job (that is, the skills they need to do the job in their own language). So business English is used together with **business communications skills**.

Secondly, the English used in international business is not necessarily the same English that native speakers use. It is a lingua franca. It may even be considered a new type of English which has developed and is developing to meet the needs of its users. People whose first language is English do not necessarily speak this language. There is much discussion among academics about what such a language might be like (Is it less idiomatic? Does it use different syntax? How many varieties are there?). No one really knows. The important thing to remember is that the language the learners need may share only certain characteristics with the teacher's own version of English.

Thirdly, although we know a lot about how people interact and the sorts of things they say to each other, there are many areas of business English or ESP where there is not much reliable information on what people actually say. (There are various reasons for this lack, such as the difficulty in recording natural discourse, people's reluctance at being recorded, and business people's concerns over issues of confidentiality.) A good example of this relative lack of information is in the matter of **small talk**, which often seems to have a relationship-building function, rather than direct business content. Small talk is the simple throwaway line we might offer when we meet someone in the corridor, or the seemingly banal discussion about the weather when we bump into someone in the car park. Such conventional, polite exchanges might be vitally important to the business English learner who needs to build good business relationships, but not much is known about how they work. There may well be certain parts of business English teaching that rely on (the teacher's and the learner's) **intuition**.

Learners might need to learn everything from general English, to general business English, to a particular type of English (British English, US,

International), to an ESP, or a mixture of all of these. And they need to be able to use this language successfully across a range of different cultures and alongside a range of different business skills, and in a wide variety of contexts, and with a wide variety of interactants (some of whom may not speak or write particularly good English themselves). They need English to *do* business, not just to talk *about* business.

Teaching business communication

The teaching of business English has been influenced by a variety of disciplines, including linguistics, general language learning and teaching, and management training. Because business English is not only about language, but about language use, it is worth first considering the issue of **communicative competence**. Perhaps the most influential models have been based on work done by Hymes in the 1960s, Canale and Swain in the '70s, and Bachman and Palmer in the '80s. The basic argument, which arose out of dissatisfaction with earlier teaching approaches which tended to concentrate on linguistic items (such as written grammar rules), is that there are various components which need to be considered when discussing language skills, of which knowing *about* language is only one. Language learners also need to be able to *use* the language in real-life situations. Various ways of dividing communicative competence into its component parts have been discussed over the years, with teachers being particularly interested in the teachability of such components. Business English teachers need to focus on three key components in particular: linguistic competence, discourse competence, and intercultural competence.

Linguistic competence

Linguistic competence is shown in the use of the basic elements that go together to form a language, such as vocabulary, grammar, phonology, and so on. One of the key influences on business English teaching in recent years has been our deepening understanding of the role of **lexis** (words and patterns of words) and its relationship with **grammar** (the way the words and patterns follow rules). Traditionally, vocabulary and grammar were seen as separate aspects of language, but the distinction between the two is becoming more and more blurred as we find out more about how the language system works.

The *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* divides words into three types. **Lexical** words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) are the carriers of meaning. **Function** words deal with the relationships between lexical words, or indicate how they are to be interpreted. Examples are determiners (*the, a, some, any*), pronouns (*it, they*), modals (*can, should*), prepositions (*in, to*), coordinators (*and, but, or*), wh-words (*why, whose*). The third type are **inserts** (*yeah, well, ouch*). These categories may overlap.

Multi-word units (also called lexical phrases, lexical bundles, or chunks) consist of two or more words, which act together as a unit. In a sense they behave like a word. So *nevertheless* is one word, but *How do you do* also acts like a single unit. Indeed, studies on how we memorize language show that it is easier to store 'chunks' of language than several individual parts. Note that most multi-word units are not complete utterances, however. *What's the*

matter with ... and *I don't think it's ...* are examples of **sentence headers**, and *start off* and *bring up* are examples of **phrasal verbs**. We also know that certain words tend to co-occur with certain other words, a phenomenon known as **collocation**. So we say *small print*, rather than *little print*, or *have a meeting* rather than *do a meeting*. At times there appears to be no particular logic to such matters; it is just the way it is. **Idioms** are a type of multi-word unit where the meaning is not clear from the individual words (e.g. *It's going to crop up*, or *We've missed the boat*, or *He's in the driving seat*).

Words do not only collocate with other words, they collocate with other semantic word families (i.e. groups of words with related or similar meanings). For example, *letter* collocates with verbs which show what you can do with it (*write a letter, post a letter, read a letter, open a letter* etc), and adjectives which describe the function of the letter (*covering letter, follow-up letter*). *Market* collocates with adjectives denoting place (*European market, French market, South East Asian market*), and adjectives denoting size (*huge market, large market, big market, small market*). Finally, words tend to occur in particular grammatical patterns (**colligation**). So, for example, we can say *letter of application, letter of complaint, letter of enquiry*, but we do not normally say *market of Europe, market of France*, or *market of South East Asia*.

Another fairly recent development is the appreciation that spoken and written grammar can be very different. Forms which are acceptable in one type of grammar are not necessarily acceptable in the other. Learners need to understand that when they use **written grammar** rules in conversational speech, their language may sound unnatural and stilted.

Spoken grammar is normally used in real-time interaction. It has different word-order rules, uses **contractions** (*can't, won't*), **hesitations** (*erm, uh*), **repetition**, **ellipsis** (words left out), and is often vernacular. Utterances are often left incomplete, or change their form halfway through. Other common features include **fronting** and **tags**. For example, in the utterance, *The tape. Yeah we got it erm yesterday I think it was*, the *I think it was* at the end is a tag which qualifies what has just been said. Also common in spoken language are **discourse markers**, which often occur at the beginning of an utterance (e.g. *OK. Erm what I'd er like to do today is ...*), **backchannels** (*mmh, uh-huh*, to signal feedback), and **expletives**.

It is not only *what* is said, but *how* it is said that is of interest to business English learners. **Phonology** is about how we use our voices to make the sounds of utterances. We use **stress, rhythm**, and **intonation** (sometimes called **prosody**) to convey meaning. **Chunking** involves grouping words together, with a pause, or a change in pitch, or a lengthening of a syllable to signal the end of the chunk. Combined with stress, intonation, and rhythm, chunking can alter the way the listener understands the message.

Discourse competence

Linguistic competence deals with elements of language at a basic level, and tends to focus on language out of context. Discourse competence, on the other hand, deals with language in use, although it is important to note that the word *discourse* can be used in a variety of ways by language professionals. For the purposes of this book, however, *discourse* is used to describe how

people **interact** with each other within context. Typical examples of this include negotiations, correspondence, presentations, service encounters, meetings, and so on. In this sense, business discourse refers to the spoken and written communication that is found within the world of business. By way of analogy, if linguistic competence refers to the building blocks of language, discourse competence refers to the whole house. Like the occupants in a house, who use different rooms for different functions, the participants in the discourse have to communicate within different contexts; it follows that different discourses require different strategies.

One strategy involves the use of **register** (the degree of formality, or the degree of specificity, especially of topic vocabulary). So, for example, a chat in a pub would use a colloquial, everyday type of lexis, and would therefore have a different register from what we would expect to find in a meeting of international consortium partners about to sign a major contract, which would probably have more formal language and specific lexis. Another aspect of discourse is that often one of the participants may hold more power than the other participants, and this is also reflected in the types of language used. Thus discourse can reflect relationships between individuals, and can even be seen as a tool for manipulating others. Related to this is the concept of **genre**, which seeks to distinguish between different types of texts (for example, what makes a memo different from a letter of complaint, or a telephone conversation different from a presentation?).

Discourse can be **spoken** or **written**. Spoken discourse is often covered in business English training because it is more immediate; a learner may have time to look something up in written discourse, but the demands of spoken discourse tend to be more urgent, and so it is sometimes seen as more important in the business English classroom. The converse can also be argued: that written discourse provides a more permanent record, and so mistakes might be less easily forgiven.

There are many ways to analyse spoken discourse. One of these is **conversation analysis**, which is a sociological approach used to analyse the way people interact with each other in talk. Interaction is seen as a dynamic process which develops by taking into account what has already happened. Conversations have certain characteristics, and these can be used to help understand what is happening and how it is happening. Spoken interaction has a structure. Participants in a conversation take turns to speak, and there are rules which govern what is and is not allowed. For example, it is normal for participants to listen to each other, and to stop talking when another participant is talking. This is known as **turn-taking**.

Often utterances come in pairs, such as a question and answer, or complaint and an apology, or a greeting and a responsive greeting.

A: Hi, how's it going?
B: Fine thanks. How's it with you?

A: Tea?
B: Yes, please.

Conversations also have **opening** and **closing sequences**. For example, a telephone conversation often starts off by using some or all of the following components:

Summons answer:	*(ring ring)*	*Hello.*
Identification recognition:	*Schmidt.*	*Hi, it's Andy here …*
Greetings:	*How are you?*	*How's things?*
Initial inquiries:	*What can I do for you?*	*I'm ringing to see if you can …*

Note that the language used depends not only on the standard sequences, but also on the relationship between the caller and the receiver. The language and the tone will be very different if the call was between a buyer and seller, or an employer and employee, or two colleagues who were good friends.

Intercultural competence

I attended a language teaching conference in Korea a few years ago. At one point, another delegate came up to me, looked at my name tag and said, 'Ah, Evan Frendo. So young!' I was a bit taken aback by this remark, and muttered somewhat disparagingly that I wasn't actually that young. I did have a growing family, for example, and I had been in the teaching business for a while. 'So young', she said again, smiling. I pointed out that if she looked closely she could see my grey hair. And anyway, she looked a lot younger than me. 'So young', she said again. I was beginning to struggle at this point, because I really did not know what to say. I had never been approached by someone this way before. Then I noticed her name tag, which said 'So Yung'.

This anecdote is an illustration of what can happen when people from different cultures meet. In this case, it was a simple case of a conversationalist from one culture hearing an unfamiliar name and mistaking it for a familiar, if surprising, judgmental comment. Even the simplest things can be difficult, and what can be worse, we often have no idea that there is a problem. We seem to operate on different wavelengths. Geert Hofstede describes culture as the 'software of the mind', or 'the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another'. Fons Trompenaars defines it as 'the way in which a group of people solve problems'.

Culture has to do with attitudes, behaviour, beliefs, and values. It is influenced by a multitude of factors including environment, gender, family, age, and ethics. It is learned, not inherited through genes. It manifests itself in interaction between people, and is continually changing. Some cultural differences are superficial, and are relatively simple to deal with. It is easy to see that people may dress or eat differently, for example. But cultural differences are not always so obvious. The **iceberg** model is often used to demonstrate how much of culture is hidden. Like an iceberg with most of its

bulk unseen below the surface of the water, these hidden aspects can cause problems if we are not aware of them and don't know how to deal with them.

There are different types of cultures. **National culture** takes as its reference point the concept of the politically bounded nation state. This is not the same as **ethnicity**, which is used to refer to groups having the same language, history, religion, or race. A nation may be composed of different ethnic groups, and ethnic groups do not always observe national borders. **Organizational** or **corporate** culture describes the specific behaviours and values found in organizations. So, for example, a young company with twenty employees which sells groceries via the Internet is likely to have a very different way of doing things compared to an older, more traditional engineering company which has been in existence for over a hundred years, and which has more than 300,000 employees scattered in different parts of the world. **Professions** also have their own distinct cultures. We might expect doctors and musicians to behave in certain ways, even when they come from very different national cultures. Even members of the group of people who use English as a lingua franca share certain characteristics with each other, because they have something in common. People can belong to different cultures at the same time; for example, an engineer in an American company may share many of the values of other employees in the same company, but in some ways has more in common with an engineer in a German company than, say, a secretary in the American firm.

Stereotypes are generalizations which are often used to simplify and categorize other cultures, and by extension the people in those cultures. We often use them to try and understand a new situation or unfamiliar behaviour (for example, it may be useful to know about the importance of 'face' – i.e. people's feelings about their own worth, self-respect, and dignity – in Asian countries), but there are limitations to their usefulness. One major problem is that stereotypes do not allow for exceptions to the norm. So we think that (and act as though) all members of a particular group behave in a certain way, and make no allowance for individuals in that group.

Intercultural competence, then, includes the ability to deal with, and be sensitive to, differences in how other cultures do things. From a business point of view, the aim might even be to recognize and utilize those differences in order to create something which adds value for the business or its customers.

Communicative language teaching

Teachers have used such models of real-world communication and perspectives on society to inform what happens in the classroom. The theorists' emphasis on communication has led to a widespread enthusiasm for the approach known as **communicative language teaching** (CLT), which aims to develop learners' ability to use language to communicate. CLT is not a precise term and can mean different things to different people. However, there are some underlying principles commonly shared. First of all, language is seen not just as a set of linguistic items to be learned, like words or grammar, but it also involves language in use via functions such as interrupting, or agreeing and disagreeing (**functions** are ways of describing what a speaker is trying to achieve at each stage in a communication

activity). When considering functions, we are focusing on how we use a language, as opposed to what we know about a language. Another key aspect of CLT is that languages are learned while using them, with an emphasis on real-life situations. Meaning takes precedence over form. Fluency can take precedence over accuracy.

It is often argued that there are two basic forms of CLT, a weak and a strong one; both forms are used in business English classrooms. The weak form of CLT focuses on *what* is to be learned. A typical approach here is **PPP**, where language is **presented**, **practised** using a variety of different activities, and finally **produced** through some sort of communicative activity. A variation on this is the **deep-end approach**, where learners are asked to perform a task that makes demands on their competence in using language, and then their performance is diagnosed, leading to a focus on specific language items. Another alternative suggested by Michael Lewis is to create a learning cycle which starts with **observation**, followed by **hypothesis** and **experiment** (**OHE**). Harmer's **ESA** model suggests that a teaching sequence can be divided into three components where the learners emotionally **engage** with the situation, **study** the language, and then **activate** it. All these approaches focus on *what* is to be learned.

A strong form of CLT focuses on *how* learning takes place, in other words it argues that language is learned via the **negotiation of meaning** in real communication. People learn by using the language to achieve a specific **outcome**. The main theoretical argument is that people do not learn in a neat, pre-ordained fashion, so deciding what language items to focus on is not an effective way to teach. It may be much better to provide the right input and atmosphere, which allow learning to take place at the individual's own pace and in response to their needs.

In the business English classroom this is often done via **tasks,** which are activities where the focus is primarily on using language to *do* something. It is the outcome of the task which is important, just as in the business world the language is a means to an end, not an end in itself (compare this to traditional language exercises, where the focus is primarily on learning language rules). The theory is that language is learned via the interaction; the learners learn by doing the task. Many researchers claim that **task-based learning,** coupled with judicious feedback which allows learners to pay some attention to form (that is, the linguistic item which needs to be improved), is the most productive way of learning a language. The great advantage for business English learners is that the language produced while doing a task can be immediately relevant. The disadvantage is that it is often difficult to predict exactly what will happen during a task, which can make them difficult to plan or assess. For the less experienced teacher there may also be a feeling of loss of control. In addition, some tasks can be completed with a minimum of language input from the participants, which makes them not necessarily the best way to provide maximum exposure to useful language.

Yet even though CLT in one form or another is used worldwide, there are some problems with it. It is by no means certain that CLT always works well anywhere and everywhere. For example, the requirement to use the language in real communication may not work well with a very large group of learners

or with learners whose own educational and cultural background presupposes that the teacher is the only one who speaks. Likewise, not all non-native English teachers feel comfortable with a method like CLT that can at times require native speaker levels of competence. Classrooms and cultures across the world may have their own, more appropriate way of doing things which takes into account local expectations and needs. The reality is that teachers pick and choose the approach best suited to their own experience and teaching style, what resources they have available, and the particular learning needs of the learners. Such an eclectic approach typically works well for the more experienced teacher, but perhaps less well for the newcomer.

Conclusion In this chapter we have:
- looked at various types of learners and teachers, and also considered a range of common teaching contexts.
- noted that the language of business English depends on the general and specific contexts where it is being used, and that other factors, such as communication skills, also play a role.
- seen that business English is far more than talking about business or about language; it is about communicating and doing business in English.
- looked at the concept of communicative competence, and seen that business English learners need to develop linguistic, discourse, and intercultural competences.
- discussed approaches to teaching English, particularly communicative language teaching, and noted that there is no single best method; business English can be taught in many ways.

Looking ahead In the next chapter we will look at ways to gather information about our learners and teaching context, which is often seen as the first stage in the process of teaching business English.

Assessing needs and preferences

- Needs analysis
- Communication needs
- Pedagogic needs
- Business needs
- Three examples

Needs analysis

Before we can start teaching a course there is a certain amount of information which we have to gather in the form of a **needs analysis**. A needs analysis helps the teacher to understand the difference between where the learners are, in terms of communicative competence, and where they need to be to meet their business aims. Sometimes this needs analysis is minimal, and simply consists of a series of brief questions which give the teacher a rough idea of the needs of the group. But at other times a needs analysis can be a more substantial proposition. A large-scale needs analysis (sometimes called a **language audit**) can be designed to look at an organization and work out its strengths and weaknesses in terms of communication in English. All levels of the company will normally be involved, and the aim will be to build up a picture of the current situation, and balance that against strategic goals as well as short-term needs. The process may include gathering information about future markets, customers, suppliers, and even competitors. Clearly in any company there will be major budgetary implications, in terms of the expense of data collection and analysis, and of interpreting it to decide the way forward. Issues to be addressed could include the level of language competence certain post-holders should have, how language competence might figure in recruitment policies, the evaluation of current language training providers, and so on. The language audit might be a key stage as an organization develops and maintains a language strategy, allowing it to deal effectively with language problems in various markets and supply chains.

The basic aim of a needs analysis is to collect, and examine critically, information about the **current situation**, in other words where the learners are before teaching begins, and the **target situation**, which is where they would like to be at the end of the teaching. Understanding the difference (the **training gap**) between these two situations leads to the course design (syllabus, methods, constraints, learning strategies, and so on).

First, we need to be clear whose needs we are talking about – the learner's, or those of the company or organization which is paying for the training. Sometimes the school, university, or training provider is also a factor. Also, there is often a difference between a learner's **perceived** needs

and **felt** needs. The former represent the view of the other stakeholders in the equation, such as the teacher, the sponsor, the co-workers. In a sense, these are the 'experts', who can identify needs based on their own experience and knowledge. The felt needs are those needs which represent the learner's perspective. Here is an example:

Perceived needs	Course participants should be able to take part in negotiations with foreign partners.
Felt needs	I would like to improve my speaking and my grammar.

Another way of looking at needs is to think about them in terms of what and how we might teach. Can we translate needs into a list of **products** which we as teachers deliver to the learner? This could be a list of language items, for example, or a list of skills, such as *giving presentations* or *asking questions in meetings*. Or should needs be seen in terms of the **process** of delivery, with the emphasis on **how** the learning takes place? Here we are talking about the training as seen from the individual learner's perspective. How does a particular learner learn? What affective factors need to be considered? What methods should I be using? As ever in language teaching, the answer probably draws on both perspectives.

There are several possible ways of looking at needs analysis, but what is important is to appreciate what a needs analysis does. It does not produce a sharply defined list of things to do in the classroom. Indeed, the more we find out about our learners' needs, as inevitably happens as a course progresses, the more difficult it can seem to meet those needs. What a needs analysis does is offer a chance to focus on those areas which are more relevant to the learner or the company. It provides a **series of snapshots**, none of which gives the complete 'truth', but all of which contribute to understanding. The more snapshots we take, the better our understanding. The needs analysis differentiates a general English course from a course for specific purposes. On certain courses it can also be used as a **justification** for what happens.

A needs analysis is unique to a specific training situation. There is no standard model of needs analysis, and there is no 'single best way' to do it. A needs analysis is not an objective exercise; it entails exercising judgment and finding compromises to make the best use of resources in a particular teaching context. It is about working with learners to decide on the best way forward. At the end of all this effort, it is still inevitably vague in parts.

This vagueness can be a problem with a sponsor or learner who is paying for something well defined, and is getting something that looks a little bit rough around the edges. A teacher working with companies must be aware of this, and must be able to produce a needs analysis which is businesslike and efficient, while at the same time being realistic and not making promises that cannot be met, particularly regarding what language teaching is and what it can achieve. Tied to this is the problem of using ELT jargon; part of our job as teachers is to make sure that we are speaking the same

language as those paying for the training (sponsors). Learners and sponsors may have other views of what the teacher's 'role' is, for example, or what the word 'grammar' means. Conflict can be avoided by regular consultation, clarification, and negotiation.

During a needs analysis teachers gain access to some often quite private or sensitive information, which might need to be handled with care. Indeed, business English teachers are often required by their customers to sign some sort of confidentiality agreement, and teaching institutions may be subject to regulatory constraints on how they manage information (such as Data Protection Acts and privacy laws). There may also be ethical questions to consider. Is all the information gathered really necessary? Who has access to the information? What will the department head be told about their employee? And was the employee made aware of this at the time the data was collected? Is the teacher competent enough to use this information in order to make decisions which could affect people's careers? And so on.

Needs analysis, then, is rarely a clear-cut thing: a tidy needs analysis, the result of which prescribes course design, which in turn dictates materials design, is more likely to be encountered in textbooks than in real life. Real needs analysis is dynamic, and messy. It doesn't end until the course is over, and even then decisions have to be made about what to do with the information gathered. But it is also the best way we have to produce a focused course. A needs analysis in its most basic form is essentially a blend of information-gathering activities which use a variety of different perspectives. However, simply collecting data is not enough – it is in the interpretation and use of this data where the needs analysis really makes its power felt. The rest of this chapter considers different types of needs, and offers ways of meeting the challenges, before examining three example scenarios.

Communication needs

Different types of communication inevitably give rise to different types of communication needs. One of the aims of a communication needs analysis will be to find out as much as possible about the different areas and styles of discourse that learners might engage in. This will not only give a better idea about the target situation, but will also address the teacher's own need to understand what the learners actually do with the language. As discussed in Chapter 1, communicative competence has several layers, of which language is only one.

The first part of analysing communication needs is to find out as much as possible about what the learners on the course will need to do in English. For example, they may need to be able to use the telephone with English-speaking clients, or they may need to travel to other countries in order to sell their product. For this part of the needs analysis, a variety of tools can be used, including questionnaires, interviews, and observation.

Many commercial materials and schools provide teachers with a brief needs analysis chart or form to use with learners (see page 18). These have the great advantage that they are easy to run off on a photocopier shortly before a lesson, and provide a useful insight into the learners' communicative needs. Information gleaned by forms like this provides one

ABC School Needs Analysis Form

Date:

Name:

Company:

Department:

Telephone number:

Email:

Previous language learning experience:

Brief job description:

1 I need to improve my English in order to better:

	Urgent	Not urgent
deal with visitors		
understand presentations		
give presentations		
take part in meetings		
chair meetings		
read reports		
write reports		
deal with emails		
speak on the telephone		
socialize with business partners and/or customers		
deal with suppliers		
deal with customers		

2 My main priority is to:

of the snapshots that go to build up a composite picture of the learners' current situation. However, a possibly serious disadvantage is that the learners are being asked to complete the form in English, which is the language they are intending to learn, so the teacher may not get as much (or as accurate, or as clear) information as might have been gathered if the learners had answered these questions in their own language. For some learners, it may be worth the effort of translating the form. If the teacher is engaged in in-company work, then such questionnaires can also be adapted to suit that specific teaching context.

Relatively brief, standardized forms such as these may be convenient, but they are rarely sufficient as the sole source of information. Further details will need to be sought either by interview or during lessons. It can also be very helpful for a teacher to get direct access to the workplace of prospective learners. However, conducting a needs analysis in this way can have its pitfalls, as shown by this example:

Jason Smith works for a small private language school as a teacher – his school has been asked to help a small sales department (five employees) improve its English language skills. His boss has had an interview with the sales department head, and has gained permission for Jason to sit in the office for half a day in order to analyse the communication needs of the employees. This is a rare treat – most of his time is spent in the classroom.

The first thing Jason finds is that the people in the sales department are only speaking English for a tiny proportion of the time. Nobody really knows what to do with him, and after his tenth cup of coffee he begins to get bored. The phone rings and one of the workers starts speaking English. But all he hears is *Hi … Speaking … um, yes … Yes, OK … Of course … Bye.*

He decides to ask for some written examples and he is given four printouts of one- or two-line emails, and a copy of a three-year-old computer handbook, hardly used. There is, of course, more, but the person he asks does not have the time right now to find copies of letters or contracts, and anyway, she is not sure if she can give Jason confidential information. At that point the boss comes in, sees what Jason is doing, and asks if materials for the course are included in the overall price. Jason has no idea, because that sort of thing is handled by his boss back at the language school.

This apocryphal account can yield a number of lessons. What went wrong? Firstly, there were no clear aims. Jason received no guidance from his boss, nor did he know much about the client company. Secondly, the day chosen was not particularly useful; it would have been far better to find a day when the salespeople were involved in some sort of activity that called for real English language use (a meeting with clients, a presentation, or suchlike). Jason should have been equipped with some sort of audio recording device, and should have had permission to use it. The issue of confidentiality should have been cleared. Written examples could have been obtained beforehand, or at least requested. There were only five people, so why did he not interview each one? He could have found out their needs and perspectives first-hand by using a structured questionnaire like the one at the top of page 20.

Depending on the level and the language competence of the interviewer and interviewee, such an interview can be in English or another language, or a mixture of both. If direct observation is not feasible, then it is normally possible to get a good idea of what is required by asking detailed questions about the target performance areas, and analysing the skills needed. The answers to these questions can later be used to design classroom activities, which can be used to further diagnose target language. For example, when finding out about typical meetings, the teacher will need to know about what sort of things are discussed, how many people attend, their relationships, typical agendas, how long meetings last, whether any native English speakers are present, what other nationalities are present, job types,

Name:	
Company:	
Department:	
Contact details:	
Interviewer:	
Date:	
Department role:	
Job description:	
Length of time in job:	
Previous jobs/experience:	
Examples of English use (where, when, who, how, why):	
Perceived problem areas:	
Language learning history:	
What he/she thinks they need:	

whether the discourse is formal or informal etc. Such questions will help the teacher to get a feel for that type of meeting and allow the creation of realistic simulations, which will mirror some of the language used.

If the teacher is observing a meeting, or some other face-to-face interaction, here is some of the information which might be worth noting:

Attendees (names, roles):
Type of discourse (e.g. formal, relaxed):
Location:
Topics of conversations:
Interlocutors' relationship (who holds the power?):
Areas of conflict:
Was it a typical conversation, or rare?
Did your learner get what she or he wanted?
Intercultural aspects:
Communication problems:

The other main part of a communication needs analysis is finding out how good the learners' language use is; what is their current **communicative competence**? One common tool for this is a **placement test**, which is a test designed to provide a comparison with other learners (or with known standards or benchmarks) so that learners can be placed with others having similar needs and ability.

As well as suiting the requirements of the learners' specific situation, a good placement test needs to have certain characteristics. It should be quick, and easy to administer. It should have **validity**, in that it should test what it is designed to test. It should also have **face validity** or be credible to the learner; if we give a grammar test to someone interested in improving presentations skills, the prospective learner may start to question our judgment. Tied in with this is the issue of **authenticity** (see Chapter 4's

discussions of authentic language and materials), in the sense that the test should reflect the target language, and the way it is used (this is why a placement test should, ideally, follow the target situation analysis). It should be **reliable** so that, if different testers do the same test, the result should be the same; likewise if the learner took the same test two days later, they should get the same result.

There are a number of commercial placement tests available for purchase and on the Internet, but a potential problem is that many are tied in to using a particular coursebook or doing a particular course (they check the point at which the person can join the course). Others test with reference to guidelines and standards, such as the standards provided by the CEF (Common European Framework) or ACTFL (American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages). These tests are often adequate for assessing receptive language skills such as listening and reading, and can be used to get a rough idea of level, but will not test people for specific job requirements. It is arguable how well they test productive skills (that is, where the learner has to produce language). Most language placement tests ignore intercultural competence completely.

One way to get past these problems is to carry out a **task-based assessment**. This uses knowledge gained from the target needs analysis so that a task can be designed which reflects the real-life situation. For example, if people need to give presentations, they can be asked to give one. An accountant might be asked to explain a balance sheet to her boss, a manager might have to discuss changes to a project schedule, and a secretary might have to use the telephone to change an appointment. It will normally be necessary to produce a list of points which need to be looked at during the assessment. So, if the learner needs to take part in meetings, he or she probably needs to demonstrate ability to:

- Read and understand the points on an agenda.
- Take part in real-time interaction, including putting forward a point of view, explaining a course of action, asking for clarification, and dealing with unpredictable language.
- Produce a set of minutes summarizing the key decisions.

Such a test is sometimes called a **diagnostic** test, because the intention is to diagnose any weaknesses.

Once tests have been carried out, the results can be checked against a list of proficiency or can-do statements, such as those used by the CEF or ACTFL. Sometimes they may be specifically drawn up for the company or organization involved. An example extract from the CEF is given on page 22.

There is a summary taken from the ACTFL on page 23 (similar guidelines exist for reading, writing, and listening).

These charts are useful because they allow teachers to compare their subjects' current communicative ability and target needs, and thus find the gap. They also help in placing learners in the most appropriate group.

Table 1. *Common Reference Levels: global scale*

Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Pedagogic needs

Pedagogic needs refer to those needs which exist as a result of the teaching context. There are three main aspects to consider: the teacher's needs, the learner's (learning) needs, and the means to do the course.

Teacher's needs

If ten experienced, competent business English trainers were given ten identical groups to teach, would they come up with identical approaches? It is highly unlikely. They might do similar things some of the time, but what happens in the classroom is influenced to a very great extent by the trainer's

ACTFL PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES – SPEAKING (REVISED 1999)
from Foreign Language Annals • Vol. 33, No. 1

SUPERIOR
Superior-level speakers are characterized by the ability to:
- participate fully and effectively in conversations in formal and informal settings on topics related to practical needs and areas of professional and/or scholarly interests
- provide a structured argument to explain and defend opinions and develop effective hypotheses within extended discourse
- discuss topics concretely and abstractly
- deal with a linguistically unfamiliar situation
- maintain a high degree of linguistic accuracy
- satisfy the linguistic demands of professional and/or scholarly life

ADVANCED
Advanced-level speakers are characterized by the ability to:
- participate actively in conversations in most informal and some formal settings on topics of personal and public interest
- narrate and describe in major time frames with good control of aspect
- deal effectively with unanticipated complications through a variety of communicative devices
- sustain communication by using, with suitable accuracy and confidence, connected discourse of paragraph length and substance
- satisfy the demands of work and/or school situations

INTERMEDIATE
Intermediate-level speakers are characterized by the ability to:
- participate in simple, direct conversations on generally predictable topics related to daily activities and personal environment
- create with the language and communicate personal meaning to sympathetic interlocutors by combining language elements in discrete sentences and strings of sentences
- obtain and give information by asking and answering questions
- sustain and bring to a close a number of basic, uncomplicated communicative exchanges, often in a reactive mode
- satisfy simple personal needs and social demands to survive in the target language culture

NOVICE
Novice-level speakers are characterized by the ability to:
- respond to simple questions on the most common features of daily life
- convey minimal meaning to interlocutors experienced with dealing with foreigners by using isolated words, lists of words, memorized phrases, and some personalized recombinations of words and phrases
- satisfy a very limited number of immediate needs

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own style, experience, and needs. An important part of a needs analysis, then, is for the teacher to consider questions like:

- How do I think people learn best?
- What are my strengths and weaknesses?
- What experience do I have?
- What do I know about my own learning style?
- How much of what happens in the classroom is a result of my personality?

Learning needs and styles

Teachers have long recognized that learning success depends on a number of factors, one of which is the **learning style** of the learner. There are a number of different ways to look at learning styles. One broad categorization is based on the findings of research into brain function, that the right and left sides of the brain play different roles in how we process information. Thus, two main types of learners can be identified, depending on which side of their brain is dominant. 'Left-brain' learners tend to analyse, and to be logical and objective. They may prefer traditional lectures, reading, and clearly structured classroom activities. 'Right-brain' learners tend to be more impulsive and informal, and may appreciate the use of graphics and role-play activities to enhance their learning.

This perspective on learning styles is related to **NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming)**, which is a collection of techniques, models, and theories based on how the mind works and how people behave and communicate. 'Neuro' refers to how we perceive the world through our nervous system, and draws attention to how we use our senses; thus, for example, we talk about learners being *visual* (they think in pictures and respond most readily to visual stimuli), *auditory* (they think in and respond most profoundly to sounds), and *kinaesthetic* (they think in terms of touch and smell and learn best when some kind of physical activity is taking place). 'Linguistic' emphasizes how language allows us to perceive the world around us, and how we influence that world. 'Programming' refers to the idea that we can train ourselves to behave in certain ways, and become more precise in our use of language, to help us achieve our aims. NLP has been useful to some business English teachers because of the insight it gives into various communication skills such as building rapport, non-verbal communication, active listening, and so on, but it can also help our learners understand how they perceive the world, and what affects that perception.

Howard Gardner's **multiple intelligence** theory provides another way to compare learners' learning needs. It suggests that there are eight different types of intelligence, but that each one of us possesses each intelligence to a greater or lesser degree. These intelligences, which can be developed, are summarized as follows:

- **Bodily-Kinaesthetic** – the ability to control one's body in order to do things or solve problems (coordination, physical speed, balance etc).
- **Intrapersonal** – sensitivity to one's own feelings, strengths and weaknesses, values.

- **Interpersonal** – sensitivity to others' moods, ability to interact with others.
- **Verbal-Linguistic** – the ability to use oral and written language to express meaning and remember things.
- **Logical-Mathematical** – the ability to deal with problems in a logical way, numerical skills, cause and effect, concepts.
- **Musical** – sensitivity to rhythm, pitch, melody.
- **Visual-Spatial** – the ability to deal with forms, space, shapes, colour, and visually-based activities.
- **Naturalist** – the ability to recognize and classify things in the natural world.

Teachers can look at their learners in terms of these intelligences, and draw conclusions as to what learning styles and strategies might be most suitable. Of course, trainers will develop their understanding as the course progresses. So, for example, a learner who appears to function well in intrapersonal intelligence might benefit from activities which allow time for quiet self-study, and a person who is strong in logical-mathematical intelligence might benefit from activities which analyse language structures. It is rarely practical to carry out psychological or psychometric testing as part of a needs analysis, but the trainer does need to be sensitive to the fact that learners have different needs, and that something can be done about it (after all, in any group of students there may be several different styles among the individuals in the group).

Learning styles are also influenced by the culture of the learners; in many Asian contexts, for example, the teacher is seen as an expert, whose job is to tell students what to do or what 'the right answer' is. This can cause problems when a teacher trained and experienced in Western learning environments sees his or her role as a facilitator, encouraging learners' autonomy, whereas the learners expect something completely different.

Finally, it is important to remember that needs analysis is about making ongoing evaluations. So teachers should continually be asking themselves questions like 'What worked well today, and what didn't, and why?'.

Means analysis

A means analysis is a description of the training environment: what is available in terms of equipment, facilities, and time, and perhaps more importantly, what is not. One significant aspect is what materials are available (this is covered in more detail in Chapter 4).

Means analysis normally produces lists which have an important bearing on the cost of the course. For example, let us assume that the teacher has been asked to run a course on presentations skills for a company. The training is to take place in a hotel. Questions such as who is going to provide the camera and multimedia projectors, what materials to use, whose photocopying facilities to use, and so on, have a direct impact. Here is a list of points that should be thought about during the means analysis:

- What **facilities** are available (e.g. rooms, seating, location, refreshments)?
- What **equipment** is available (e.g. board, flipchart, cameras, projectors)?

- How much **time** is available to **design** the course and prepare materials?
- How much **time** is available for **training**?
- What is the availability of **suitable materials**?
- What **time of the day** will learners be available?

Business needs Understanding business needs is of critical importance. A provider of language training must consider the needs of the sponsor, who may be a company, or a head of department, or the HR (Human Resources) manager. These will all have certain perspectives on what the learners will need to cover on a course. It is important to make it clear to sponsors that their needs are recognized and will be addressed, while remaining realistic about what is promised. And it is equally important to remember that businesses are interested in getting something worthwhile for their money. A company pays for training because it feels that the investment will lead to some sort of profit, be it more motivated workers, more effective negotiators, better presenters, managers, or whatever.

One way to understand business needs better is to learn as much as possible about the company. This means doing some research. Ideally, this is done before starting to meet people. Corporate clients are normally favourably impressed if the trainer or language school they are dealing with knows something about the company's product, the market, its size, and so on. With the Internet this is relatively easy to do. But there are also limitations; reading an annual report will give one perspective, but remember that such documents are designed to tempt would-be investors. Similarly, websites which are open to the public may not have all the details a teacher needs. What we are looking for at this stage is some basic information so that when we go into the company and start talking to people we can demonstrate our professionalism and ask the right questions. There is a difference between asking a manager what the company's main product is (which we should know already), and asking about how the company is organized (which might be information not available to the public).

We will also need to understand the various business functions of those involved. If we are analysing the engineering department, for example, its perspective will be very different from that of people in the financial department. We should find out a little about the product if we can, and try and look at it from a production point of view. The engineers who build mobile phones will have a very different perspective from the one we may have as a user. They will be interested in materials, technical specifications, and so on. The financial people will be more interested in the last auditors' report, and next week's balance sheet. The commercial clerks may be more interested in the process (and paperwork) of actually getting a product to the customer, with all the terms of payment and delivery which that involves.

As has already been pointed out in Chapter 1, the level of the person in the company hierarchy is also relevant. A high-level manager in a multinational corporation will not have the same needs as a person on the shop floor, even if they both have the same marks in a language placement test.

At some point the teacher will need to meet the various **stakeholders**. These are the people who have some sort of stake or interest in the English training, and could include the learners, the sponsors, the HR department, the head of departments whose employees the trainer will be working with, and so on. A key stakeholder will be the person who triggered the course in the first place: the teacher will want to discuss reasons and possible outcomes for the innovation in as much depth as possible. These meetings are also a chance to fill in the gaps in knowledge about the company, and as pointers for further research. Teachers will also use these meetings to find out exactly what the company is expecting them to provide.

Understanding the business situation where the learner will be using the language is also important. This has already been covered (see section above, on Communication needs), but it is worth reinforcing the point that gathering this information is not always easy. There may be issues of confidentiality, and it might be that people simply do not want the teacher present when they are meeting customers. **Work shadowing** is one way to get around this problem, and is an excellent tool for getting to understand a company's and/or learner's needs. Here the teacher simply stays with a person for an agreed length of time, and observes everything that that person does. A variation is to include teaching and feedback at opportune moments.

Three examples

Here are some examples of needs analysis in practice, showing the various interrelated factors we have been considering.

Example 1 (page 28)

These notes were written, after her initial meetings, by a business English teacher about to start her first course with pre-experienced students in a university.

Comment: This teacher has made an excellent start, but will probably prefer to wait until she meets the students before she can design the course in any great detail. During this first lesson she will want to have activities which allow her to assess the students' spoken interaction, as well as some sort of questionnaire which will tell her more about the students' own perspectives.

Example 2 (page 29)

This example contains diary notes written by an experienced business English teacher after a series of 1-to-1 lessons with a senior executive in a multinational company. The important thing to note here is how the teacher's awareness of the learner's needs changes with each session, emphasizing that information gathering is an ongoing, evaluative process.

Comment: The apparent ease with which success was achieved belies the fact that the teacher is obviously very experienced with presentation training. Note how the need to work on chunking and intonation was recognized almost at once, and how he treats the learner ('We agreed', 'Worked through the script together', 'We now think'). Clearly, in this case the teacher has assessed the character of the learner as someone who is able to handle the responsibility for her own learning. Note also that the teacher is able to adjust the sessions according to the learner's availability, and is

Sources of information: Dean (15 minute interview), other teachers (very useful), two telephone interviews with graduated students.

Summary: Students currently in their 1st year at uni. Aim to qualify with degrees in business admin. in 3 years. Requirement to do a 3 month work placement overseas after 1st year. Likely language – English. Typically work placements require the student to:

- Work in a number of different departments (e.g. finance, production, sales, marketing etc).
- Participate as a team member in a project (analysing information, attending meetings, using schedules etc).
- Give informal presentations within context of project/departmental meetings.
- Travel to various locations in order to meet with partners/clients (but not as key decision makers).
- Write a report at the end of the work placement summarizing what they have done (normally around 2000 words).

Other factors:

Class Size: 30 ish

Location: Twice a week, 90mins per session, lecture hall. Three 13 week semesters.

Homework: Acceptable (but remember, correcting homework is not paid extra).

Materials: Each student has a copy of 'English for Business Studies', published by SUP??? Book consists of a number of newspaper/magazine articles on business topics, each followed by comprehension exercises, language work (vocabulary and grammar), & suggested topics for class discussion.

Classroom facilities: whiteboard, multimedia projector. Camera can be booked in advance from secretary's office.

Language level: All students have a minimum pass grade C at the university entrance examinations, but note that some students passed at grade A. Mixed ability class. Entrance examination comprised a 500 word essay on a topic of their own choice, a multiple choice grammar test, and a newspaper article followed by comprehension questions.

Example 1

Notes after initial meeting - 15 minutes
Name: Sandra Ho.   Company: Megaelectroniks Inc.
Contact Details: Email: S.Ho@Megaelectroniks.com; Tel: 35627928 (via PA)
Function: Board member responsible for European investments.
Main needs: Preparation for an international conference in Rome next month, where she is to give a keynote speech.
Availability: Four two-hour sessions, over the next two weeks. Need to liaise with PA over precise timings.
Initial thoughts: Very confident. Appears to speak well, and has good command of vocabulary. Was able to describe her job and her needs without any problem. Suggested she gives her speech at the first session.

Notes after session 1 (2 hours)
40 minute keynote speech - she read every word! Very monotonous. Need to work on chunking and intonation. We agreed it would also be useful for her to have some prepared 'spontaneous' opening remarks, and also some practice dealing with questions.

Notes after session 2 (1 hour)
Worked through the script together, going through her chunking ideas. One or two areas still need to be sorted out. Agreed that we would film her next attempt so that she could see what it looks & sounds like. Must organize a camera & microphone.

Notes after session 3 (2 hours)
Chunking the script seems to have worked well, although more practice necessary. She was pleased with the recording, and is now more aware of the need to raise her head and make occasional eye contact! We now think it might be worth rewriting one or two sections of the speech, especially the introduction and conclusion. I must send her a list of guidelines for these by email tonight.

Notes after session 4 (40 minutes)
Short session today - apparently some emergency somewhere. She now has a fully revised script, and just needs to become more familiar with it. I agreed to record myself reading the script so that she has a model.

Afternote - Sandra sent me an email to say thank you. Apparently the speech was a great success. She wants to talk to me about more training.

Example 2

Aim
To assess language competence within Lambada Associates, and recommend training measures to improve standards of spoken and written English.

Background
Lambada Associates supplies technical consultants to customers both within and outside Italy. The secretarial staff often have to deal with telephone calls and emails in English, while the consultants increasingly have to deal with clients who do not speak Italian. A long-term goal for the company is for the consultants to be able to conduct their business in English (currently interpreters are used). The owner of the company, Luigi Lambada, identified the requirement for improvements to be made in these areas, and asked Wonder Language School to carry out a needs analysis and produce recommendations for a training program to meet their needs. He was very clear, however, that the initial need was for an extensive general English programme at a low level, which would meet the needs of many in the company.

Needs analysis
I interviewed 4 members of the company and discussed specific needs and perceived problem areas. I also discussed various options with Mr Lambada. Depending on the results of the placement tests currently being carried out, the following initial decisions have been agreed:

- Training to take place twice a week, 90 minutes per session. Facilities will be provided on company premises, including DVD player and multimedia projector.
- Materials should be based on a commercially available coursebook, supplemented by tailor-made materials.
- Groups should not be larger than eight people.
- Attendance records are to be submitted to Mr Lambada at the end of each month.
- There is no requirement for a commercial test at the end of the course.

The following outlines for each level were also agreed:

- Initial course (Pre-intermediate): 70 hours. Should concentrate on skills such as telephoning, making small talk, improving general oral fluency, and providing a foundation for further training.
- Intermediate: 70 hours. Should concentrate on the skills already covered in pre-intermediate course (see above), but develop general fluency normally associated with this level. Content can partly be based on technical issues normally encountered by the participants. Emails should be introduced.
- Upper intermediate: 70 hours. Should be restricted to consultants likely to have to interact with customers in English. The training will concentrate on presentation skills, as well as language necessary for describing/discussing technical issues. Materials likely to be framework*, concentrating on individual needs. (*See page 50 for more on framework materials.)

Next steps
1 Use placement results to form initial groups.
2 Confirm times and location of training.
3 Design course and select materials.
4 Select and brief trainers.

Appendices
1 Summary of authentic material collected, with suggestions for use.
2 Ideas for simulations, role-plays, tasks.

Example 3

flexible enough to agree to record himself reading the script, even though the agreed sessions are over.

Example 3 (page 30)

This is a copy of a report submitted by a freelance teacher for a language school. Note that, in this case, the sponsors already have firm ideas about what they want the course to look like.

Comments: Unlike the previous two examples, this somewhat formal report has been written so that someone else can take over the running of the course. Note how some of the key course design decisions already appear to have been made, which partly reflect the priorities and conditions laid down by the sponsor, Mr Lambada. This report illustrates once again the difficulty of making a clear divide between information gathering, and course design: in practice, the two are often inextricably linked.

Conclusions In this chapter we have:
- seen that needs analysis, preparatory and ongoing, is the foundation of any business English course.
- considered different tools that teachers can use to collect a series of snapshots, which allow them to compare a target situation with a current situation, thus leading to a focused course.

We have seen that a business English needs analysis has three main elements, as follows:
- communication needs, based on an assessment of situations (in the learner's job) which require the use of English, as well as a placement test which measures current communicative ability.
- pedagogic needs, based on the requirements of the teaching situation, including teacher's needs, learners' learning styles, and a means analysis.
- business needs, based on the teacher's understanding of what a particular business does, and what the other main stakeholders in the teaching process perceive as the main priorities.

Looking ahead Having gathered the relevant information, teachers use their analysis of this in course design and choice of materials, the subjects of Chapters 3 and 4.

3 Designing a course

- Setting objectives
- Syllabus components
- Negotiating the syllabus
- Managing the logistics

Setting objectives

Designing a business English course is a matter of making a series of decisions based on information gathered during a needs analysis. A useful place to start is to decide on the course aims and objectives: what we (and others) want out of the course. **Aims** are general statements about why the course is happening. Here are some examples:

> The aim of this course is to improve email writing skills.
>
> **Participants will learn how to write emails within the context of the needs of the marketing department.**
>
> *The course aims to cover all types of email writing relevant to the department.*

Objectives are more specific, and break up the aim into smaller elements of learning so that the outcomes are better understood and are couched in more precise terms. Very often other stakeholders, such as a sponsor of a course, will want to look at these objectives too, and may even assist in writing them. A useful acronym to use when writing objectives is **SMART**. Objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (that is, limited to a certain time period). There are different ways to express objectives, depending on the context. Most business English courses use **performance (behavioural) objectives**, which typically describe what the learner is expected to *do*, under what conditions, and to what level or standard. Such objectives use words like *will learn*, *will be able to*, and *can*:

> **Staff will learn how to make, confirm, and change appointments with customers by email.**
>
> *At the end of the course the participants will be able to send and receive, without guidance or supervision, emails requesting and clarifying information about potential partners' scope of supply.*
>
> Level 4: At this level, participants can express and comment on views and opinions in appropriate written form, so that these can be understood by native speakers, and within the context of internal company correspondence.

Sometimes a course might use **teaching** or **training objectives** which, unlike performance objectives, do not normally specify what the learner will be able to do at the end of the course. Instead they are designed to give the teacher useful guidelines, and they may use technical words which learners may not be familiar with. Examples are as follows:

> *The modules on this course will provide a foundation for future letter-writing courses at intermediate level or higher.*
>
> **The course is designed to increase participants' awareness of appropriacy and register in email communication.**
>
> **The training will enable participants at management level to interact more effectively by email with their peers in the US.**

It can be valuable to get learners to write their own objectives, and these can then be discussed in terms of how relevant or achievable they are. For example, learners can be asked to complete the following sentence: *At the end of this course I hope to be able to ....*

In practical terms, it is often difficult to describe language or business communication skills with the desired precision, and sometimes such skills are hard to quantify and measure. In such cases a compromise may be to list typical behaviours that might be expected of the participant:

> The aim of the course is to prepare participants to take part in negotiations with foreign partners. Participants will typically be able to demonstrate:
> * **an increased awareness of different types of negotiation,**
> * **an understanding of common strategies and tactics,**
> * **the ability to listen actively to what is being said,**
> * **the ability to clarify and summarize at appropriate moments.**

Such objectives might be presented in a slightly different form to the learner:

> This course will help you to take part in negotiations with foreign partners. You will learn about:
> * **different types of negotiations,**
> * **the most common strategies and tactics,**
> * **how to listen carefully to what is being said,**
> * **how to clarify and summarize at appropriate moments.**

Note that these behaviours are not as precise as those discussed above (How do you measure 'increased awareness' or 'an understanding'? What does 'learn about' actually mean?). It is also important to remember that the **business objective** may be quite different. For the above negotiation training, for example, the real business objective may be to negotiate successfully, in order to maximize the company's profits in a new market (the aim). In other words, the outcome of the course can be seen not only in

terms of what has been learned (focusing on the learner), but also in terms of changes in the workplace or in business results, resulting from the training having taken place (focusing on the business). Such issues relate to course evaluation and accountability (who is responsible for the success of the course, or for ensuring best value return on expenditure?), and are becoming more common as organizations and schools try to get as much as possible out of limited budgets; they are discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.

Finally, there may be other practical constraints in the business English teaching world. One of these is that teachers might only be able to find out if objectives are achievable *after* the course starts. Another is that sometimes the people on the course turn out to have completely different objectives from those formally identified before it started. Most experienced teachers will testify to the common problem of irregular attendance; many participants do not come to classes regularly. There are many possible reasons for this; they may have too much work, or they may find that the teaching is not proving as effective as they had hoped and so start to cut lessons. Whatever the reason, in some companies managers can get annoyed with staff who agree to attend a course, and then find that they have other, more pressing priorities. This can sometimes reflect on the teacher, as staff attempt to argue that the course was not that good anyway. So, it is sometimes helpful to agree an additional objective with course sponsors, such as:

> Attendance: to complete the course successfully, participants will attend 18 out of 20 classes.
>
> *The participant will complete 15 modules from the online syllabus by June 1.*

Syllabus components

Once we know what we want the course to achieve, we can move on to thinking about the syllabus. This is, essentially, a list of *what* is to be covered during the course, and in *what order*. One key principle is that the syllabus should focus on language needed to *perform* a particular business task, not merely to talk about it. Most business English learners need to be able to communicate within a certain **context**, so the syllabus must reflect the **discourse** that the learners will face in the workplace. For efficiency, teachers must ensure that this exposure to useful language is not random. So the course designer's job includes finding the most common language forms that will help the learner to communicate, and planning how and when the learner will encounter them. This language needs to be **learnable**, which means that it must be appropriate to the **level** of the learner. The learning must also be **achievable** in the time allowed; for example, it is unrealistic to suggest that a complete beginner will be able to take part in complex negotiations after a week's teaching. The syllabus provides a **structure** that puts the selected language into orderly, manageable chunks, with both the content and the order matched to the learners and their situation. It also provides a basis for decisions about materials.

A useful technique for designing a course is to use a grid or framework which sets out the aims and objectives, followed by all the elements that we believe are necessary for someone to be able to meet those objectives. The main components of this framework are based on the competences identified in Chapter 1 (linguistic competence, discourse competence, and intercultural competence), together with the guidelines offered by communicative language teaching, and our own understanding of what our learners need. Thus, the syllabus will take into account not only what is to be learned, but also how it is to be learned. It will normally consist of a combination of the following components (sometimes called **threads**, because they weave through the course and could be seen as holding it together):

- Grammar (e.g. tenses, word order, verb patterns, relative clauses)
- Lexis (e.g. vocabulary, idioms, expressions, collocations)
- Pronunciation (e.g. intonation, rhythm, stress, chunking)
- Functions (e.g. complaining, agreeing, persuading, explaining)
- Business skills (e.g. presenting, negotiating, telephoning, socializing)
- Topics (e.g. finance, marketing, production, management)
- Learning strategies (e.g. learning styles, recording vocabulary, preparing for a test)
- Situations (e.g. assisting visitors, checking into a hotel, running a meeting)
- Texts (e.g. examples of spoken or written discourse)
- Language skills (e.g. reading, writing, listening, speaking)
- Intercultural skills (e.g. defining culture, comparing cultures, awareness activities)
- Storyline approach (e.g. materials have a set of characters who form the basis for a storyline)
- Tasks (activities in which learners use language to do something and achieve an outcome)

Organizing the syllabus

Determining the **order** of the syllabus can be done in different ways. A common way is to put the **simpler** things first. For example, a grammar tense which appears straightforward (e.g. present simple) may be taught before a concept that appears to be more complex (e.g. modal verbs). Standard phrases for starting a telephone conversation are taught and practised before moving on to more complicated role-plays involving their use in a real phone call. Signposting language in presentations (see Chapter 5) is taught before asking learners to put an introduction together. Further practice on introductions might be done before asking learners to give a presentation.

Familiarity might also be a guideline. It might make sense for learners to cover familiar situations or topics before unfamiliar ones. For example, it is probably easier for a learner to give a presentation on his or her own job than on something which might be less familiar (or perhaps conceptually more challenging), such as business ethics or politics.

Sometimes the order is based on **need**; if the course is going to take several months, it might be wise to cover areas of a higher priority first. Receptionists might benefit from telephone training before letter-writing skills, for example, because the need is perceived to be more immediate.

Another reason for organizing syllabuses in a certain way is that sometimes certain language items seem to hang naturally with specific topics or functions – so conditionals are often coupled with negotiations, or talking about the future is coupled with making arrangements. The need for variety and balance in teaching might also influence what activities are chosen.

Finally, it is useful if the syllabus can be divided into **teaching blocks** which have their own aims or objectives, and which can fit logically into the time available. Often such blocks have a standard format, and incorporate different types of activities which allow flexibility and change of pace in order to meet the needs of a particular group. In coursebooks, these blocks are often called **units**, each of which has a logical or thematic coherence, even if the unit is not necessarily to be completed in one lesson. One unit may lead on to the next, or there may be flexibility with the order in which they are used, but there is normally some continuity between units. **Modules**, in contrast, are normally independent blocks which can be put together in various ways to create a course; many schools and teachers have 'ready-to-go' modules on specific communication skills, for example. The teacher simply has to select the relevant modules for a particular group.

Two examples of syllabuses

The example on page 37 (top) is a course outline from a commercially available coursebook (*In-company Intermediate* by Mark Powell), which is targeted at learners who sometimes have to use English at work, or who may need to do so in future. The topics and texts (spoken and written) provide ample opportunity for learners to focus on the types of discourses and communication skills they will need to know. The course also gives the learner the chance to focus on specific linguistic items, in this case grammar and lexis. Such a book could well form an excellent basis for the intermediate group of learners described in Example 3 in Chapter 2 (the Wonder Language School needs analysis), although the teacher would probably need to supplement it with authentic materials and activities reflecting more precise company needs.

By way of contrast, the next example is an extract from a syllabus produced for a group of Greek factory managers (see page 37, bottom). Their factory had recently been taken over by a US company, and dealing with the challenges imposed by the new culture (both corporate and national) was a priority. This course was specifically designed to improve the managers' impromptu presentation skills, needed at meetings, which had been identified as an area of concern. Note that the syllabus is designed to allow flexibility – the teacher is able to focus on lexis, pronunciation, and/or intercultural topics as necessary, while at the same time following a clear plan of action.

Unit and topics	Communication skills and tasks	Reading and listening texts	Grammar and Lexis links	
1 International English p4 Talking points English as a global language	Completing a needs analysis Doing a quiz on languages Discussing attitudes to English using expressions for talking about language needs & learning preferences	R: Article about English dominating world communications L: People talking about their attitudes to learning English		
2 Making contacts p6 Networking Conferences	Describing people Discussing appropriate conversation topics Keeping the conversation going Networking	L: Extracts from a business travel programme on conference venues L: People gossiping at a conference L: People socialising at a conference	Present Simple Present Continuous Present Simple vs Present Continuous	Collocations relating to conferences Verb + prepositions
3 Making calls p11 Desk work Using the telephone	Making telephone phrases Exchanging information on the telephone	L: Planning a telephone call L: Voice mail messages L: Telephone conversations	Past Simple Time adverbs for, in, during, ago, over, before	Telephone expressions for dealing with difficulties & distractions
4 Keeping track p16 Meetings Meeting skills	Checking & clarifying facts & figures Querying information	L: Extracts from meetings R: Texts: the Budweiser companies L: Extracts from a meeting L: A briefing meeting	Comparatives & superlatives Comparative & superlative expressions	Phrasal verbs with on, out, off, up, down
5 Speed of life p23 Talking points Time management Pressure at work	Discussing time management strategies Discussing statements on how speed affects your working life	R: Mini-texts: statistics about the working week R: Extract from Getting Things Done by Roger Black L: People talking about how speed affects their work L: People talking about how they unwind after work		
6 Business travel p23 Networking Travelling on business	Expressing likes & dislikes about travelling on business Making polite requests & enquiries Situational roleplays Identifying signs as British or American English Greeting visitors	L: Extracts from business travel conversations R: Article from Newsweek about people who live in two cities L: Short exchanges in British & American English L: Conversations at the airport	Polite question forms Indirect questions	Collocations relating to travel

From In-company Intermediate by Powell

Aim: to improve impromptu presentation skills
Objectives: participants will:
A Watch a series of recorded presentations (produced by US managers).
B Discuss and analyse techniques used to emphasize, soften, and persuade.
C Practise such techniques in a controlled environment.
D Practise giving impromptu presentations.
E Take part in feedback activities designed to focus on any weaknesses.
Time available: One-and-a-half days

Objective	Time	Content
A / B	09:00–11:00	Watch / discuss videos
A / B	11:15–13:15	Watch / discuss videos
C	14:30–16:30	Emphasizing, softening, persuading
C	16:45–18:45	Emphasizing, softening, persuading
D	09:00–11:00	Presentations practice
E	11:00–13:15	Feedback

Negotiating the syllabus

With many classes, often the best way to identify what should be included on a course is for the teacher to sit down with the learners (and other stakeholders) and negotiate the syllabus. This has the major advantage that the learners are usually much more motivated because they helped design what is to be done. The syllabus can be negotiated at any time – indeed, the teacher and learners can re-negotiate as the course progresses. Sometimes there are practical issues which influence what actually happens, such as availability of video equipment, or the teacher's own expertise and experience. And sometimes it may be necessary for the teacher to guide the discussions so that the end result is achievable, or meets a sponsor's aims. Here are three activities for negotiating the syllabus on day one of a course:

What the group wants – the teacher gives learners the following sheet. They fill in the first two questions on their own, and then pass the sheets round so that everyone can see what their colleagues want and do not want, and can understand that different people want different things. The sheets are then used as a basis for the third question, the answer to which is, in effect, the syllabus and which will have to be some amalgam of the differing priorities that have surfaced. Generating the syllabus in this way brings home to many learners that what happens is actually a compromise. Getting them to sign at the bottom of the page is a useful way to remind them that they are part of the success of the course. These sheets can be used to review the course later:

Course Negotiation

What I want from this course:

What I don't want from this course:

What the group wants from this course:

Name: . . . .

Date: . . . .

Signature: . . . .

Negotiating priorities – this time, the aim is to guide learners towards a possible syllabus by suggesting possible options (see page 39).

A variation on this is to give learners different options during the course: do they want to do this or that next week? Teachers might allow learners to develop their own tasks and activities. For example, if the course is covering presentation skills, the learners could make decisions about the topics of their own presentations, or the length, or the criteria for success. Such an approach emphasizes the need for consensus and compromise, which are such important elements in group work.

Look at the following list. Add three more learning activities, and then decide which is the most important for you, and which the least. Order the list from 1 (most important) to 10 (least important).

	My list	Colleague's list	Group list
Learning about grammar			
Using specialist vocabulary			
Using general vocabulary			
Reading texts			
Writing letters			
Speaking activities			
Listening to recordings			
. . . .			
. . . .			
. . . .			

Now show your list to a colleague and negotiate a new list (second column). Finally, discuss the list as a group and negotiate a group list (third column).

Refining objectives – this is a much more focused third option, based on a needs analysis for a corporate department. Note that the list is a mixture of communication skills and specific content which is relevant only to the people concerned (context note: K27 is based in France, while K33 is a department based in the US):

The following list of course objectives is based on pre-course discussions with K27 and K33 management. Read the list. Do you agree with the contents? What would you add, remove or change?

Objectives:

At the end of the course K27 staff will be able to:

- describe K27's scope of supply, roles of key persons, organization
- show awareness of cultural differences between the USA and France
- make small talk and socialize with K33 staff
- read and discuss technical reports issued by K33
- give informal presentations about project developments to K33 staff
- manage telephone conversations with K33 staff
- discuss quality issues and internal procedures
- deal with email correspondence between K27 and K33

Managing the logistics   Course design is not only about deciding what to include in the syllabus. There are many practical considerations which can influence what happens (see Chapter 2). For most teachers in schools, such issues will probably be coordinated by administrative staff, but some teachers, particularly freelancers, will often be heavily involved in administration. Simple things like a broken monitor or shoddy materials can easily ruin a course, however well the syllabus has been thought out. Similarly, issues such as costs and budgets may have a significant influence on the course design; using an expensive 5-star hotel provides a very different learning experience to using a small classroom in the depths of a private language school or a spare conference room in company offices. Business English learners expect a high level of professionalism in the way a course is run, and such professionalism can and should be designed into the course.

One decision which needs to be made is whether the teaching is to be intensive or extensive. In practice, in the world of business English teaching, the terms seem to be used differently by different organizations. **Intensive training** can be anything from a few hours a day, for a few weeks, to ten days in a hotel, working all day. Intensive training is often used where time is short and where there are specific performance objectives to achieve. It tends to be much more focused than extensive training, and is often more efficient in its use of time (no need to warm learners up every 90 minutes, for example). For many learners, intensive training leads to noticeable improvement. Often intensive training goes under the name of **workshops** or **seminars**, which aim to focus on specific topics. The other key advantage is that attendance is not normally a problem. Once the learner is committed to the course, he or she tends to stay. **Extensive training** normally refers to regular but short sessions, such as two 90-minute sessions per week. This is typical of some in-company training, but also for pre-experienced groups such as Business studies students who are doing English as just one part of a course of study. The advantage is that such classes cater for those learners who cannot find time to take an intensive course. The disadvantage is that attendance and motivation can be a problem.

Many courses combine the two types; for example, learners may attend 90-minute extensive classes once a week throughout the year, but also have a three-day intensive session every three months. A third variation is to have part or all of the course delivered at a distance. This mixture of face-to-face (F2F) and distance learning is sometimes known as **blended learning**, particularly where one of the media used is electronic. Distance learning brings in an additional facet to the already complex business of course design, and is discussed in greater detail later in this book (see Chapter 7).

On all courses there are practical, logistical issues which need to be addressed beforehand. In some schools and organizations these are not the teacher's responsibility, but in many business English teaching contexts the teacher is the only representative of the training provider on site, be it in-company, or in a hotel, or other hired venue. Even in a school classroom, the teacher needs to be well prepared and would be wise to check practical aspects of course delivery beforehand. Business English learners can be critical and demanding customers.

A close examination of the logistics behind a hotel-based residential course will exemplify the sorts of issues involved. Once the learners have been identified and placed into the appropriate group, there are a number of things to consider:

- **Pre-course joining instructions** – these need to be issued to all learners. Good instructions serve the purpose not only of providing relevant information but also, if well designed, can help to ensure that the learner arrives motivated and ready to go. It can be an inauspicious start for both teacher and learners if participants do not know what they are supposed to do. Here is a checklist to help with this:

  - Course title (and maybe teacher or school's name)
  - Course dates
  - Address of venue
  - Start and end times
  - Payment details (are all necessary forms included?)
  - Clothing requirements (dress code on course, appropriate leisure wear)
  - Pre-course reading or other preparation
  - Information about the local area
  - Travel instructions and tips (and map?)
  - Contact name and details (in case of difficulties)
  - Facilities in hotel
  - Nearest banks, shops, places of worship, medical assistance etc.
  - Meal arrangements
  - Outline course content
  - Course materials provided
  - Things to bring (e.g. writing equipment, any pre-sent materials)
  - 'Code of conduct' (e.g. no smoking, no mobile phones on in class)

Other factors which may need to be coordinated before the course starts include the following:

- **The training room** – this is the place where teacher and learners are going to spend most of their time, so it is important that it is optimally arranged. The teacher should allow plenty of time to check the layout beforehand (are desks and chairs to be laid out in rows, or with chairs in a U-shape, or in small groups around tables?), and will also need to set up and test any equipment which is to be used (e.g. video camera, multimedia equipment, overhead projector, interactive whiteboard, pens). If the syllabus calls for lots of group work, the teacher will also need to ensure that the necessary break-out/syndicate rooms (rooms for additional activities such as preparation for a negotiation) are available, although in some cases it may be possible to use the corridor, lounge area, or hotel foyer. Other issues to think about include ventilation, heating, sunlight, and noise.

- **The venue** – although the training room is key, it is not the only place where teachers and learners will spend their time. The teacher should

therefore make sure that appropriate care is taken with planning for free time (e.g. if there is an evening start, it may be useful to start the course with a social event to help build group rapport and get everyone to feel more relaxed). It is also worth checking up on Internet availability and photocopying facilities. Finally, the teacher should not forget to find out who the key members of the hotel staff are, and where they will be in case of problems.

- **Contingency plans** – teachers should ask themselves, 'What happens if … ?', and be prepared to deal with the situation accordingly. Possible problems include: interruptions, distractions, materials or guest speakers that fail to arrive, venue problems (double-booked, dirty, inappropriate food), illness. Flexibility, patience, and inventiveness may be called for!

Conclusion

In this chapter we have:
- looked at the importance of setting aims and objectives.
- noted that a syllabus involves making decisions about what is to be covered, and in what order.
- looked at components that might go into a syllabus, including grammar, lexis, pronunciation, functions, business skills, topics, learning strategies, situations, texts, language skills, intercultural skills, storyline, and tasks.
- looked at factors which might influence the choice of components, including difficulty, familiarity, and need.
- looked at some examples of a course outline.
- examined ways of negotiating a syllabus with learners.
- recognized that logistics also have a critical role to play, in that learners and teachers all need to be aware of where they need to be, what they are to do, and have access to the resources they need to do it.

Looking ahead

We have seen that gathering information and designing a course are essential elements in business English teaching. However, once in the classroom, it is the materials which provide the teacher with the support necessary to run an effective course. This is the subject of the next chapter.

Selecting and developing materials

- Coursebooks and other ready-made materials
- Tailor-made materials
- The learner as a resource
- Framework materials
- Authentic materials
- Role-plays, simulations, and case studies

Coursebooks and other ready-made materials

There is a large (and, some might say, bewildering) range of different off-the-shelf language teaching publications available, and it might seem that all a teacher has to do is find those that best fit the needs and aims of their learners. Coursebooks are popular all over the world, and there are very good reasons for this.

Perhaps their most obvious advantage is that they can save the teacher a lot of work. A coursebook provides a solid framework to work with, which is particularly useful for the less experienced teacher or one who is under time pressure. Many of the pedagogic decisions, such as course content and methodology, are already made. Most coursebooks look professional, which is normally important with business English learners. In addition, many coursebooks come as part of a package that includes comprehensive teacher's guides and resources, supplementary materials for the students, self-study materials, audio and video resources, and so on. For certain types of courses, and particularly those for pre-experienced groups, they may also provide a window on the business world.

However, there are various caveats that need to be borne in mind when using published coursebooks. As we have seen, business English teaching is about meeting the needs of the learners and/or their sponsors, and it is rare that a coursebook can do this completely successfully without any additional material, or without being adapted in some way. Coursebooks can sometimes date fairly quickly. They can include culturally inappropriate content, and they may include assumptions about language learning which do not always fit with the teacher's or learners' own perceptions of how best to learn a language.

It is worth thinking about the different perspectives of those connected with coursebooks, materials produced in-company, or indeed any mass-produced material. The *learners* might have very specific requirements, depending on their cultural background and learning context. Important factors for them could include layout, clear structure, relevance, regular progress checks, entertainment, revision opportunities, self-study sections, reference sections, up-to-date content, and authenticity. Price might also be

a factor, depending on who is paying for the course. *Teachers*, on the other hand, have different priorities; depending on their experience, these might include things like the amount of guidance offered, extra activities, flexibility, ease of use, and how much preparation time is needed and available. They will want a coursebook that fits in with their own understanding of how people learn languages, and may also want a coursebook which is not too technically demanding in terms of the business world (or has a comprehensive glossary explaining the terminology). The *publishers* may have different priorities again. They are obviously keen to satisfy the needs of learners and teachers as much as possible, but a book intended for a fairly wide clientele cannot always satisfy relatively specific needs. The more innovative and confident teachers can feel that some publishers are too conservative in their approach, preferring to publish books that do not take too many risks with novel teaching approaches. Similar pressures not to be too innovative or daring can apply to the *in-company* training department, which may commission materials from in-house trainers or outside authors.

So, there can be conflicting interests, hence inevitable compromise, and this may lead to frustration or dissatisfaction with off-the-shelf materials. One way to counter this, seen in recent years, has been for course providers to produce focused, short courses, which target a specific need and cost relatively little to make. Publishers have also marketed packages of various core materials, supported by supplementary material which can be selected according to need. Some publishers produce books that encourage the individual learner to customize and make the material their own.

Authenticity

A key issue when considering the choice of coursebook (or indeed any materials) is **authenticity**. Does the language in the coursebook come from the real world, or has it been specially generated or substantially adapted for language teaching purposes? Some teachers argue that course texts, spoken or written, come across as contrived because they have been designed to focus on particular lexis or forms. Others argue that there is nothing inherently wrong with using non-authentic language, and that it is better to use 'artificial' text which is packed full of useful lexis, or simplified in some way, because this is effective and efficient.

There is also the issue of the authenticity of activities (i.e. how closely related they are to the learner's professional world). Do the learners see the content of an activity as authentic, or do they treat it in a different way? For example, if they are required to answer a letter as part of a course activity, do they do it in the way they would do it were they not in the classroom? Very few people in a company actually read newspaper articles in English as part of their job; however, many teachers feel it is still worth reading articles in class. The task may seem unrealistic but the authenticity lies not only in the materials themselves, but also in what the teacher expects learners to do with those materials.

A related question is how we as teachers react to learners doing an authentic task; do we (and should we) use the same criteria as for an artificial

task to decide how well an authentic task was carried out? If the activity involves a negotiation or a presentation, for example, the main criteria for success should coincide with the business aims – the language itself comes second. But what do our learners really want from us; do they expect teachers to confine their concern to vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, or to act as cultural guides and business communication trainers?

Choosing a coursebook

There are basically two ways to choose a coursebook. In some teaching contexts, the teacher might be able to sit down with the learners on the first day of a course and go through various possible books, highlighting the good and bad points of each. The learners end up having a say in what is chosen, resulting in a firmer commitment to make the course a success, and (we hope) with materials that suit their needs. The second (more common) way is for the teacher (or institute) to make the decision for the learners. In both cases, the following questions will help to clarify some of the issues:

Think about the group of **learners**. What are their main communication, pedagogic, and business needs (see Chapter 2)? Make a list of key words (which will help to ensure that needs are kept to the fore during the decision-making process).

Have a look at the cover of the coursebook and what the **overall package** includes (do you have everything available to look at?). Does it look right for the group? First impressions can count for a lot.

Look at the **teacher's book**; what does it say about the philosophy underlying the course? Does it concur with your own ideas of how languages are learned? How is it organized?

Look at the **contents** page of the coursebook. How is the course organized? What communication skills and language areas are covered? Are the units similar in layout? Is there any flexibility in the way units can be used? Is there a storyline? Can the learners personalize the contents in any way? What about topics? Are they relevant? Up-to-date? Interesting?

Check the **texts** (spoken and written). What types are included? Listen to and/or watch some of the recordings, and read some of the texts (dialogues, articles, correspondence etc). Do they have an authentic feel? How has the language been selected? How relevant are the texts to the learners' business situation? Is the language presented useful for talking about business, or for doing business? Are the lengths and complexity of the texts suitable?

Look at the **activities** in a typical unit, and think about how you would use them in class. Is there enough variety and flexibility? Is there the right balance? Are the teacher's guidelines clear? Are there any supplementary materials in the teacher's book? Will the activities be useful to your learners? How realistic and relevant are the role-plays and simulations? Do the units have clear aims?

Does the book fit in with your learners' **cultural context** in terms of content and approach?

If your learners are preparing for an **exam**, does the book offer the right guidance and practice?

Find out what other classes or teachers think about it. Does the publisher and author have a good **reputation**? If the book has been reviewed, what was written about it?

What about **cost**? Will your learners/institute be prepared to pay for the whole package?

Do the materials require **special equipment** (e.g. CD or DVD player)?

Can the coursebook be **delivered on time**?

Can the coursebook be used by the learners **once the course is over** (e.g. as self-study material, or as a resource, or reference book)?

So far we have considered how to choose a coursebook before the course starts. It is also worthwhile thinking about these issues while the book is being used. Most teachers do this intuitively; they know if a book is working or what its strengths and weaknesses are. Reflective notes (what worked well or not so well, what adaptations were made etc) can be written after each unit in the teacher's book. Doing an objective evaluation and gathering feedback may help the decision-making process the next time a course is run. This evaluation should take into account both the teacher's and learners' perspectives. It need not be complicated; something like this will suffice:

For the learner (at the end of a course):

What did you like about the coursebook?

(please be specific, giving page or exercise numbers where relevant)

What didn't you like? (again, be specific and give page or exercise numbers)

How will you use the coursebook now that the course is over?

For the teacher (at the end of each unit or session):

Activities done ... Comments ... Possible improvements ...

Tailor-made materials

Sometimes learning institutions or teachers find it necessary to produce tailor-made materials, designed to meet specific needs, for use on their own or to supplement a coursebook. Such tailored materials can be lavishly produced by a training department or institute which commissions materials for specific projects or clients. At the other end of the scale is the individual teacher, armed with a computer and a printer, able to produce nice-looking, up-to-date, bespoke materials.

Adapting materials

Many teachers build up a huge collection of materials as they become more experienced, and these can be easily adapted to suit a particular client or group of learners. This 'tailoring' is not only at the relatively cosmetic level of including a logo or company name and course date on the top of the page, but can also include adapting material that the teacher has already produced for a previous course to look as if it has been custom-made. The following extracts from a business simulation activity provide an example of this (the core text of the email is adapted to suit three different learning contexts – see page 47).

The attached documents then contain details about various infrastructure points in the three sites. Again, with minor changes, they can be made to look tailor-made, even though the basic task can remain the same.

Sometimes the tailored materials are no more than a simple worksheet which has been adapted to include specific vocabulary. The example on page 48 is taken from a worksheet written to enable learners to entertain and inform visitors, showing how vocabulary has been altered for learners in two different contexts.

Context 1 – this is an in-company course for a group of engineers in a multinational electrical engineering company based in France. They all work in the production department. A KD router (a piece of electrical equipment) is a best-selling product in this company.

From: Your boss
To: You
Subject: Project KD27

You have been selected to join a London-based project team for two months, working on production aspects of a new version of the KD router. You will need to be in London from Monday to Friday, but you will be able to fly home for the weekends.

The team, made up of managers from various production departments, is currently being put together and will start work as soon as possible. The immediate task is to recommend a site for a new assembly plant.

I have attached copies of the documents you will need to get started. Please get back to me if there are any problems.

Best regards,
Boss

From: Your boss
To: You
Subject: European Project

Context 2 – a mixed-level group in a language school

You have been selected to join a government-sponsored project team for two months, working on a new European ministry building.

The team, made up of experts from a number of different companies, is currently being put together and will start work as soon as possible. The immediate task is to recommend a site for the building.

I have attached copies of the documents you will need to get started. Please get back to me if there are any problems.

Best regards,
Boss

From: Your boss
To: You
Subject: London for two months

Context 3 – a group of property consultants based in Rome

You have been selected to join a London-based project team for two months. You will need to be in London from Monday to Friday, but you will be able to fly home for the weekends.

The team is currently being put together and will start work as soon as possible. The immediate task is to recommend a site for a new factory which will assemble components for an electrical engineering company.

I have attached copies of the documents you will need to get started. Please get back to me if there are any problems.

Best regards,
Boss

For a group of factory staff:

> Hi. My name is ... , and I'm the ... here at ... . First, I'd like to tell you a little about our organization, and then I'll take you around the **plant** and we can look at the various **facilities** we have.
>
> OK, here on this organization chart you can see the top layer of management at this **plant**. Mr ... is the **factory head**. Just under him are five departments: **Logistics**, **HR**, **Production**, that's where I work, and ...

For a group in an accountancy company:

> Hi. My name is ... , and I'm the ... here at ... . First, I'd like to tell you a little about our organization, and then I'll take you around the **offices** and we can look at the various **departments** we have.
>
> OK, here on this organization chart you can see the top layer of management at this **branch**. Mr ... is the **senior partner**. Just under him are five departments: **Investments**, **Audits**, **Tax**, that's where I work, and ...

Generating tailor-made materials

The advantage to teachers of making their own materials is that these can be much more specific, and look right for the part they have to play. Obvious disadvantages are that they can be very time-consuming to prepare, and need skills and experience in materials writing, word-processing, graphic design, and the like. And sometimes the creative results of all this investment are so context-specific that they can only be used once. Nevertheless, elements of a piece of specially generated material may be re-usable in another context, and the teacher may have developed valuable new skills in the course of preparing the specialist material. Tailor-made materials will continue to play a major role in the business English teacher's toolbox.

How does one write tailor-made materials? Preparatory stages include assessment of the learners' needs, deciding on priorities, identifying and analysing language items, working out pedagogical approaches, deciding what sorts of activities to use, making decisions about layout etc, and evaluating or piloting early or draft versions. In practice, teachers do not create something completely new (there is no need to), but adapt ideas and resources to suit particular situations. Adaptation of existing materials takes advantage of work that someone has already done (including selection of general language items, writing base text, structuring and formatting a document, testing activities with groups of learners). Generating new tailored material usually takes more time and effort, not only because it must be designed, but also because the components of the new material need collecting and assembling. Fortunately, teachers and materials developers have many resources available to them, including information and ideas on the Internet and in the business media or in the public documents of companies, as well as what the learners themselves can bring.

Corpora (collections of real language data) can be a particularly useful resource. It is now relatively easy either to compile one's own corpus of language, or to gain access to huge, computerized language databases. These give trainers the ability to access real language, both spoken and written. A **concordance** is a list of phrases, each showing the same word or language feature taken from a corpus, which allows users to focus on a particular lexical, or grammatical, or discourse issue (concordances are generated electronically, so they may be accessed via the Internet). A typical **concordance program** can allow the user to isolate a particular language feature and analyse it in detail. Teachers may do this themselves, or may ask learners to produce their own concordances.

Here is an example of a concordance of uses of *market* taken from the BNC (British National Corpus). Here the user simply typed *market* into the query form. The first screenshot shows *market* used as a noun, while the second shows *market* in its infinitive form. Typically, teachers extract a few

Sales in the ultra-competitive North American market have also been slower than hoped gene
d, according to analysts at InterConsult Inc, the market could be worth $190m by 1995.
ressure, but the rules will hurt everybody in the market and finally they will hurt Slovakia.'
he machine being launched on the international market in June 1994.
ell be hit as the group invests in trying to grow market share, enter new business sectors, and
unction preventing the company from using its market power to engage in allegedly unfair cor
torola's current role is to open up the merchant market for PowerPCs, selling to those that won
Moreover, software is a fast-growing market — the entire European market is curren
uch as possible, therefore, should be left to the market.
Seoul stockmarket, the world's 14th biggest by market capitalisation.
ng to a new Dataquest report, having led in that market since 1987.
er ordinary individual participant in the product market in which the company operated.
chroder conceded , an attempt to 'broaden the market' in these difficult times.
men are extremely disadvantaged in the labour market.
state and influencing its responses both to the market and to civil society.
e neutral, leaving the sector free to respond to market forces and to the general, national poli
press carried out a smear campaign against the market women, claiming they were armed terro
What, then, about the product market?
ch questions are asked about the brands in the market in question
own directions

he British group's large distribution network to market its own products.
res to adjust s ago when he took the six-year-old Mozart to market, as it were, on the celebrated tour of Eu
who may see These would be better able to market its strengths (which are being shown to
ars to offer a 'very significant' improvement to market information and transparency.
ompany — Wisdom Agricultural -- to make and market the device.
D and Chips & Technologies (C & T), it plans to market versions of Intel microprocessor chips
What Ishida is demonstrating is the ability to market a plane for commercial travel, where th
It was Sunday, and dead as the proposal to market a can of 'Diet Guinness'.
'Businesses appear to be looking at ways to market themselves with an increasing emphasi
ply, and changes that offer them the chance to market their skills.
There is no secret of its wish to market versions of Britain's first generation rea
rters will give a permanent base for the RIBA to market architects' services to clients and will p
d eggs, preferred to send any such produce to market.
and a good crop of healthy lambs to be sent to market was essential.
ir future remains uncertain as outgoings rise to market levels.
ying for the conversion of vacant apartments to market rate housing, the population interviewe
ight as well be desired to drive twenty foxes to market.
Then they try to market the not-sogoods at a slightly cheaper p
s no intention of taking his winning boar off to market.
h Weald Airfield, has formed a new company to market the Ilyushin Il-103 light aircraft throug
he stores, and on the other they will be privy to market data and forecasts, so that they can pla
aving exclusive European rights from Boeing to market the item.
he Swiss companies to own these brands and to market them globally.
service that has been established within BGS to market advanced geophysical survey, processir
BGS has licensed Campus Instruments to market and sell these systems on its behalf.

items from such concordance lists, and then use them in class; for example, they could ask learners to write down things they notice about the way the words are used, create gap-fills for their colleagues, complete the sentences, write similar ones themselves, and so on. The learners can investigate the language themselves, becoming more aware of how things work, and hopefully internalizing much of what they learn. Such fairly open-ended activities are often more effective as learning tools than heavily controlled exercises which focus on testing accuracy.

Sometimes teachers wonder if a word or phrase is worth spending time and effort on. If it is specialist vocabulary used frequently in company business, then there is little doubt, but if we are not sure, checking such corpora will give a better idea of how often that word or phrase actually appears in real language. Corpora allow us to move away from intuition to objectivity in our efforts to develop appropriate and useful materials.

The learner as a resource

As we have seen, there are times when we cannot find pre-packaged materials that have been designed for our particular teaching context. In business English teaching this can be problematic because our credibility as teachers is partly dependent on how relevant we can make our lessons; the business English learner wants to know where their studies are going to take them, and why they are doing what they are doing. This is partly why tailor-made materials are worth serious consideration. But there are other approaches we can take.

A very productive approach is to use the learners themselves as a resource. With job-experienced learners the advantages of this are immediately obvious – who can tell you more about the job and its requirements than the people doing it? But this kind of advantage is not limited to experienced learners. The aim of using the learner as a resource is to get *content* from the learner; the teacher remains the *language* expert.

One way of getting useful content is to chat to the learners. We know that interaction helps the learning process anyway. But the chat needs to be purposeful and focused, or we may run the risk of losing students or clients! We can pick up on particular utterances to focus on, for example, or we can use questions to develop the content. We can ask learners to role-play real situations from their workplace (meetings, telephone calls, and the like). The basic procedure is to discuss the background, followed by role-plays where the teacher and/or learners take on specific roles. These can be recorded and reformulated until everyone is satisfied that the language being produced is appropriate. Learners write down key language points which can then be used as reference notes, or as a basis for future lessons. Often the business English learner will bring material (letters, reports, email, a brochure etc) into class. In effect, we collaborate with the learner to generate the language used. This should be encouraged, because the learner then has a personal stake in the lesson.

There are other ways in which the learner can be utilized as a resource. Two main approaches are to use frameworks, and to interact with the learner as both a source and a user of authentic materials.

Framework materials

Frameworks are explicitly structured contexts, designed to help teachers and learners generate and focus the language produced in the classroom. They do this by creating a situation where the learner is pushed towards using specific language in order to complete the task set. If a learner finds this difficult, then the teacher (or other learners) can help by making suggestions, or reformulating what has already been said. Often the material that embodies the framework will consist of a diagram or very simple outline, or a list of key words which can be used as a prompt. Some can be produced before the lesson; others are created in conjunction with the learners. Here are some examples:

- Ask the learners to bring in their diary (or calendar) for next week, and take you through their plans.

- Ask learners to draw a time plan of a project they were involved with, and talk you through the project.

- Ask learners to draw, label, and talk through a pie chart showing how much time they spend doing various activities during a typical day.

- Ask learners to explain the procedures of applying for, and getting, a job at their company.

- Ask learners to devise and explain a flow chart that shows industrial production processes (in their industry).

- Ask learners to draw a quick picture of themselves (or write their name) in a circle in the middle of a large sheet of paper, with radial arrows coming off the circle. At the end of each arrow is the name (or – for a more lively discussion – a drawing) of a person (customer) they have spoken to in the last day (week). They use this diagram as a prompt to discuss work issues.

- Ask learners to write down the outline/key words of a presentation and then give the presentation.

- Draw two boxes, labelled 'Product A' and 'Product B' (where A and B are real products offered in the learners' company, or products with which they are familiar). Learners describe the similarities and differences, advantages and disadvantages of each product.

- Ask learners to draw a map showing the layout (functional or physical) of the department or company, and explain what each part of it does.

There are many advantages to using such materials: they are easy to produce, generate relevant language, focus on meaning rather than on form, and do not depend on the level of the learner. With some learners it is possible to run a complete course using just framework materials of this type.

Authentic materials

Within the world of English teaching, **authentic materials** are texts which have not been produced specifically for classroom use. In the context of business English, they are normally real commercial documents, or

newspaper articles, or recordings of meetings and conversations made in a workplace. Using such materials is a fundamental part of teaching people who are working in companies, and even coursebooks and materials designed for pre-experienced groups often use authentic materials in their content. Their advantage is that they bring us closer to the world of business, and more importantly, the learners can relate to them and see the point of the training. Another advantage is that they help the teacher understand more about the learners and their needs.

There are disadvantages and difficulties too. Firstly, authentic materials can be commercially or legally sensitive. We can arrive to teach a lesson expecting our learners to have brought materials in (as they promised in the last lesson) and then be disappointed when none are offered. Confidentiality can be cited as a reason for failing to bring documents into class, although some companies are prepared to invest a significant degree of trust in their trainers and make them privy to sensitive information. Another potential difficulty is that the learners are normally busy people, and it takes time to trawl through files and computer drives looking for materials, or to make an audio recording, for the English teacher. Sometimes learners may lack the confidence to bring in their own work and show it to other learners. In some contexts suitable materials simply don't exist; perhaps the class is of MBA students who have not yet worked in an international company, or perhaps the in-house course is for a company that has only just moved into an international marketplace, and its employees have never had to do anything in English before.

Even if the teacher can get hold of genuine documents, the chances are they will need adapting, either because they may not be at an appropriate level, or they may only contain one or two 'usable' items, or because they are only relevant to a few people in the class (ploughing through an irrelevant document can be extremely tedious, and may alienate learners). Even though authentic materials have distinct advantages, the aim is to teach people how to communicate in English, and that aim is paramount.

Here are examples of authentic items which can be used in the classroom:

- Letters
- Minutes
- Memos
- Emails
- Contracts
- Reports
- Company advertising brochures
- Presentations (PowerPoint™ slideshows, overhead acetates)
- Voicemail messages
- Audio and video recordings of real interactions
- TV adverts
- Company sales videos
- Internet and intranet websites

Although, ideally, these materials would always be in English, sometimes people on a language course arrive with documents that they need help with

translating into English. The value of translation as a learning exercise has been questioned by some teachers, but in certain cases it closely resembles what our learners have to do in their real jobs (for example, putting instruction manuals or promotional brochures into English, providing a guide for English-speaking visitors, and so on) and so should be seen as a focus for worthwhile classroom activity. We should not discourage learners from bringing us documents that are not in English; even if we can't translate them fully ourselves, we might be able to do it as a team effort with the learner(s), and the process of translation can bring a lot of useful language into play as the learners are forced to explain words to us. We can also learn more about a company and about various aspects of business in this way (learners in other groups may be impressed when we display our newly acquired knowledge of business processes or products!).

It is convenient if authentic documents can be provided in electronic form; not only are poor quality photocopies frustrating, but more importantly, having materials in electronic form allows teachers to adapt and reproduce them more easily for classroom use, and to adapt them for other classes if this is appropriate and acceptable to the original producer(s) of the document. Here are some examples of possible activities that can be done with authentic materials (either adapted or in their original form):

- Reading (skim, scan, summarize, answer comprehension questions).
- Create gap-fill exercise (remove words and replace with gaps).
- Ask students to predict content by just giving them section headings.
- Scramble the text and ask learners to rearrange it into the correct order.
- In the case of correspondence, ask learners to compose a reply.
- Get learners to select ten useful phrases or words from the document, and discuss their choice with other learners.
- Discuss possible improvements in the material.
- Use pictures and diagrams to prompt discussion.
- Ask learners to explain and clarify the issues in the document.
- If the authentic material includes notes or slides for a presentation, ask learners to deliver that presentation, or discuss content, or layout of slides.
- Select sections of a report for learners to read and present orally.
- Get learners to explain figures, calculations, graphs, tables etc.
- Use customs or shipping documents to get learners to explain the process of moving goods from suppliers to customers.
- Redesign logos or letterheads, discussing the rationale behind the design.

The ideal activity is probably to interact with the authentic material in the same way that the learners might have to in real life. For example, with a letter, the teacher could play the part of customer who has received it and has some questions to ask. With a presentation, the teacher (and other learners) could watch it and then role-play contributing questions from the audience.

Authentic spoken material may also be very useful, although it can prove difficult to obtain in practice. Sometimes teachers are allowed to attend and record meetings, record phone conversations, and so on, although such

opportunities are more likely to be made available to an in-house trainer. Otherwise, we can perhaps record colleagues carrying out role-plays of tasks similar to those faced by our learners, or we can make recordings of telephone calls we have with our learners. If we do have authentic spoken material, there are various ways to exploit it. One way might be to get our learners to focus on and notice particular aspects of the text, or particular communication issues. These might be vocabulary, useful phrases, grammatical points, or even non-verbal aspects of communication. We may ask the learners to transcribe what they hear, or compare their understanding to a transcription we have prepared earlier.

Audiovisual materials, such as business news reports or company promotional or training videos, can provide excellent opportunities to focus on the specific language used to discuss products (useful for the language teacher, as well as the learners). A typical activity would be to ask learners to watch three recent news reports, and then fill in the following table; this can then be used as a basis for discussion.

	Report 1	Report 2	Report 3
who			
what			
where			

Role-plays, simulations, and case studies

Effective business English materials need to allow learners to produce the language they will need in their workplace, and these activities need to be designed into the course. Typically, such activities involve role-play, simulations, and/or case studies.

Role-play

A **role-play** is an activity where the learner takes on a role; they do not play themselves. Normally the learner's behaviour or even opinions are limited to the options given on the instructions card. The language to be used in the role-play may also have been pre-taught in some way. Another typical feature of role-play exercises is the **information gap** – none of the participants know all of the relevant information. Two examples are shown on page 55. The first is from *Market Leader Pre-Intermediate* by Cotton et al. Such materials are good for pre-experienced learners because most of the information they need is given. They may well have no personal experience of the featured situation to bring to the role-play. One disadvantage is that unless there is enough time given to preparation – in this case, memorizing the details on the card – the role-play is interrupted by learners having to look at their cards to remind themselves of what they are supposed to say.

The second example is from *Head for Business Upper-intermediate Student's Book* by Naunton. This role-play provides an excellent opportunity to practise language and concepts already introduced in earlier activities, even if the role-play itself might not really reflect real life (how many learners will ever need to speak to debt counsellors in English?). Yet because

You are at a conference. You recognize someone you met at a conference two years ago. Introduce yourself and make small talk. Use your role-card to prepare for the conversation.

Participant A
- You met B two years ago at a conference on Customer Care in Frankfurt.
- You own a small firm which sells office equipment.
- It's your first day at the conference, you arrived late last night.
- You haven't seen the city yet.
- You are staying at the Grand Hotel in the city centre (a good choice: room service and the facilities are excellent).
- You are leaving in three days' time.
- You think the conference will be very interesting.

Participant B
- You met A two years ago at a conference on Customer Care in Frankfurt.
- You are the sales manager for a large telecommunications company.
- You have been at the conference for three days.
- You have visited the city (beautiful old cathedral, interesting museum, excellent restaurants, but very expensive).
- You are staying at a small hotel outside the city (a bad choice: room too small, too far from the centre of the city).
- You are leaving tomorrow.
- The conference is boring, the speakers talk too much and go over time.

Student A
You have decided to see a debt counselor because you are worried about your financial situation. Explain your situation using the notes below, and listen to Student B's advice.

- The company you work for has recently reduced the amount of overtime available. You depended on this to make ends meet as it added 25% to your salary.
- A year ago, you bought a TV, washing machine, and new furniture for your flat, all on hire purchase over three years. You have fallen behind with the payments and have received threatening letters from the finance company which set up the loan.
- You have a car which you use at weekends. You go to work on public transport.
- You don't know whether you should pay your rent, or utilities bills (phone, electricity, etc.).
- You have outstanding credit card bills of £2,000. You are paying 2% interest per month on these.
- You like to look well-dressed at work and have a charge card for a large department store. You pay 11% interest per month.
- You belong to a private gym which costs £50 a month.

Student B
You are a debt counselor. A client, Student A, has come to see you for some advice about best to deal with his/her debts and financial problems. Find out the details and give advice about:

- How to cut monthly costs immediately, e.g. suggest approaching the finance company which set up the loan, ask for a breathing space or reduce the amount to be paid each month.
- How to reduce the cost of any borrowing, e.g. by getting a bank loan to pay off credit cards (bank loans have a lower interest rate than credit cards), or destroying credit or charge cards.

the issues involved are sensitive, it makes sense for learners to practise such language using a role-play; discussing their own personal problems would be inappropriate. Note how Student B's role-card actually suggests solutions to the problems.

Simulations

A simulation is quite different from a role-play; it refers to an activity where the learner is playing him or herself, and (ideally) simulates what he or she might do in real life. The aim is to create a particular kind of situation in the safety of the classroom, so that when the learner meets a similar situation in real life he or she can think, 'I've already been here and done this'. A presentation rehearsal is an example of a simulation. Where more than one learner is involved, it is often difficult to create simulations which act as simulations for all participants (some of the learners will be doing role-plays) mainly because some of them might be taking on roles which are not their own in real life. For example, in a buyer–seller negotiation, if the two learners involved both come from a purchasing department (which normally only buys items), then clearly one of the learners will be playing a selling role. This is not to say that this is bad – indeed, it can be a very useful part of the learning process to see the other side's perspective. Note that, for a simulation, there must be a **realistic reason** for doing the activity in English (learners would otherwise normally be speaking to each other in their own language, at least in a monolingual group). The aim is to create **suspension of disbelief**, so that the learners become fully involved in the activity, and are not distracted by the fact that it is taking place in a classroom. Indeed, one sign of a successful simulation is where the participants carry on discussing the issues outside the classroom.

Simulations are particularly useful for in-company groups where people have real jobs to focus on. An example of this occurred in a department team in an IT communications company. The head of department wanted to simulate real meetings so that team members could practise their English in a safe environment. So, meetings were simulated using agendas that were very similar to those used in real life, and had been drawn up by the boss. The meetings were in English because many real work meetings normally were in English (the department did a lot of business with partners from overseas). The learners had to present information, discuss and justify their opinions, and come to an agreement, just as they had to do in real working life. The difference was that they were in a safe environment, and perhaps not as concerned about making mistakes as they would be when working with colleagues who were able to use English with the competence of a native speaker. Learners received feedback on their language at the end of the simulated meeting. Note that this simulation was not quite the same as holding actual department meetings in English (which is sometimes done in some companies as a language practice opportunity). The key here was that the non-linguistic know-how came from the boss; the teacher was merely the manager of the simulation and a commentator on the language used.

Another approach involves using good speakers of English to come in and take part; they might role-play a visiting customer, for example, with learners simulating their real jobs by having to pass on information, or perhaps by persuading the visitor to buy the product. Or the visitor might play a customer or partner who wishes to discuss clauses proposed for a consortium contract. The preparation time is relatively minor on the visitor's part (and on the material writer's), but the benefit to the learners is enormous; they are having to communicate with a stranger who knows their subject, but is not a teacher. A simulation might involve a learner simply discussing work-related issues with the teacher, in the same way that this might be done with a new boss, or a customer, or partner. The main point is that it simulates the type of discourse the learner would have in real life.

Here is a checklist for preparing a simulation:

- **Before the day when the simulation will be carried out:**
  - What is the aim of the activity? Are the activities carried out for a business communication purpose or for a language learning purpose? Is the simulation relevant to your learners' needs?
  - Is there a logical sequence to the planned activities?
  - Are the activities realistic? Could they really take place? Have you checked details with anyone with a relevant business background?
  - Is there enough variety, challenge, and interest?
  - Can *all* participants contribute?
  - Can the participants be creative or use their knowledge and experience?
  - Is there more than one solution (if the simulation is about a problem)?

- **On the day:**
  - Make sure that everyone fully understands the situation; check by asking questions, if necessary.
  - Give people enough time to prepare (sometimes this preparation time might be significantly longer that the actual simulation).
  - Make sure they understand the rationale behind the activity, and its aims and objectives.
  - Consider using observers to assist with the feedback.
  - Make sure the feedback includes the business task, as well as language-related points.

One other point about in-company simulations is that most groups will be more than willing to give the teacher feedback, leading to possible improvements. In effect, the last stage of the simulation is that the learners redesign it with the teacher.

Case studies

Using a **case study** enables learners to look at a particular business problem from various perspectives. The problem may have nothing to do with their own line of business, and they may or may not be asked to produce a solution. Case studies are suitable for all types of business English learner (except perhaps for those still at a low level of English language

competence), because the information needed to address the problem is normally included in the data provided, although with some pre-experience groups additional background information may be necessary. When used for in-company training, case studies may mirror closely the real requirements of the job, but they may also be used to introduce interesting material which is not directly relevant to the job, but which provides some variety and useful language practice. Teachers writing their own case studies can tailor situations to their learners' specific needs, but may not wish to invest a lot of time and effort in case-study preparation if each case is only to be used once.

Case studies often require learners to use a variety of different skills in order to complete the tasks set; the required skills may include writing, speaking, presenting, listening, and so on. The following example provides input via a short reading text. Note how simple the overall design of the case study is:

Case Study

Step back in time to consider the branding decisions of one of Britain's best-known companies.

In a brave attempt to get away from an image of old-fashioned Britishness, BA decided in the 90s to replace the distinctive red, white and blue

tailfin on its fleet of 290 passenger jets with a series of multi-ethnic designs to reflect its global status as 'the world's favourite airline'. The cost of the changeover was £60 million.

The designs, influenced by Chinese calligraphy, Delft pottery, Polish high-rise flats and images from the Kalahari desert, were immediately criticised by BA's customers, who felt the company had abandoned its core values as a world-beating British company. After just four years, and relentless ridicule in the press, the designs were finally painted over with the Union Jack flag.

Look at some of the BA tailfin designs. Do you agree with the majority of BA's customers that the Union Jack is preferable to the ethnic designs? Could there have been a compromise?

Client Pitch

Work in groups. You are advertising agencies competing for the BA account. Produce a short presentation for the potential client on how you would promote awareness of their company into the second decade of the 21st century.

Consider:

1. What are the company's core values?
2. What should be the advertising campaign's key message?
3. What new slogan would reflect this key message?
4. What new logo/tailfin design would reinforce brand image?
5. What kind of global TV commercial would be most successful? (Describe what it would be like including visuals, background music and voice-over. Draw a simple storyboard if you like to illustrate your pitch.)

Give your pitches to the rest of your class (the clients). Decide who gets the account by voting for the best ideas after your own!

From *New Business Matters Coursebook* by Powell, Martinez & Jillett

Some case studies can be much more complicated. Below is an extract taken from the teacher's notes for a case study written for a group of project managers from an international corporation. The course was run in a hotel, and the last two days were devoted to the activity. Note that such an outline (sometimes called a 'route map') is a particularly useful tool to help the teacher manage the overall situation; often there is a need for the teacher to be flexible, for example, to skip some stages, or to provide additional information as the case study progresses. Likewise the times given for each activity are only a guideline; different groups will progress through the study in their own way.

Stage	Activity Type	Description	Remarks
1 (30 mins)	Reading	SS read one or more newspaper texts about recent tax incentives designed to encourage the building of factories in specific locations.	
2 (10 mins)	Reading	SS receive an email from their boss asking for a report on the advantages and disadvantages of each location. In particular he is interested in knowing more about the logistics. At this stage he does not want anyone to know the company is interested, so he instructs that information gathering should be passive (i.e. no contact should be made with the local authorities).	Variation – SS are allowed to make contact with local authorities in order to obtain up-to-date information, but should clarify that the requests are being made for training purposes.
3 (30 mins)	Meeting	SS discuss what information they will need to gather. They divide into teams to focus on specific details.	Video record the discussions if possible. Optional activity – SS all take minutes of the meeting, and circulate these to each other. (There is a follow-up meeting to clarify points, if necessary).
4 (10 mins)	Reading	SS receive a follow-up email from their boss, requesting specific information on the following: geographical location, local business infrastructure, transport possibilities, local workforce etc.	Optional (to be used if Stage 3 does not bring forth suitable options)
5 (180 mins)	Research / Planning presentation	SS are given background information on specific areas and prepare to present information to the group.	Variation – SS are encouraged to use their own resources (e.g. the Internet, telephone calls) to prepare their presentation.
6 (90 mins)	Presentation	SS give their presentations.	Video record these, if possible.

Stage	Activity Type	Description	Remarks
7 (60 mins)	Meeting	There is a follow-up decision meeting to plan a report for the boss, and to decide on further tasks.	Video record the meeting, if possible.
8 (120 mins)	Report writing	SS draft sections of the report, and circulate these for discussion / comments.	
9 (30 mins)	Meeting	SS decide on any final amendments for the report.	Video record these discussions, if possible.
10 (10 mins)	Reading	SS receive an email from the boss requesting an oral briefing.	Optional
11 (60 mins)	Presentation	SS prepare and give a presentation to the boss.	Optional (Video record the presentation, if possible.)
12 (60 mins)	Feedback	SS and teacher discuss the tasks from (a) a business perspective, and (b) a language learning perspective.	Selection of extracts from video recordings, as necessary.

Conclusions In this chapter we have:
- discussed advantages and disadvantages of using ready-made materials.
- looked at a possible procedure for choosing a coursebook.
- looked at some practical issues with using tailor-made materials.
- looked at using the learner as a resource.
- outlined the use of framework materials, and looked at examples.
- discussed authentic materials, and how they may be adapted to suit learning contexts.
- examined role-plays, simulations, and case studies.

Looking ahead In the next two chapters we look at ways to teach business communication skills. In Chapter 5 we examine speaking skills, and in Chapter 6 we consider the writing skills used in business English.

Teaching business speaking skills

- Socializing
- Small talk
- Speaking on the telephone
- Presentations
- Meetings
- Negotiating

Socializing

We saw in Chapter 1 that business English learners often need to have certain skills in order to do their job properly, no matter what language is being used. Socializing is one such skill, and is relevant because such a lot of business-related interaction is done in places like restaurants, airports, before and after meetings, or standing chatting at trade fair stands. Most experienced business people would agree that first impressions are important when meeting someone, and this often happens in a social environment. Socializing may be vital in establishing rapport with a business partner, and good rapport is often considered essential to good business.

So what language might be taught here? Meeting and greeting people is certainly part of this skill, and business English learners need to be taught the necessary language and social conventions. Similarly, many business people need to know the language of dining out, or what to say when visiting people's homes. Another part of socializing involves being able to keep a conversation going, and to encourage other participants in a conversation to speak. Our learners use social interactions for business, as well as pleasure, and it may be important to find out as much as possible about their conversation partners. The skill is to do this unobtrusively, so that fellow conversationalists are happy to pass on information. Related to this is storytelling, or at least the ability to tell a good anecdote.

As always, the language must fit the context. Excellent use of language will be insufficient unless accompanied by an awareness of cultural factors. The businesswoman who misjudges when and where it is acceptable to make a joke, and the businessman who does not understand that alcohol plays a very different part in business socializing in Saudi Arabia, France, and Japan, will not get very far (see Chapter 8 for more on intercultural awareness).

Using role-plays and simulation

Simple participative activities can easily be designed which enable learners to practise skills used for socializing in a safe environment. For example, at a lower level of language competence, using real restaurant menus will allow learners to practise useful lexical items, and also to role-play typical

conversations about food and drink. At higher levels, learners will need to know what phrases are useful when they want to tell a story and recount a particular experience. They also need to be given the opportunity to discuss what can and cannot be said in social situations, and to develop techniques for managing conversations. In what context is it considered acceptable to talk about how much one earns, for example? When is it safe to discuss politics? At what point can an overtly social conversation move on to discussing a business contract (if at all)? How does the learner get out of answering difficult questions? Many of these questions have no firm right or wrong answers, but classroom discussion, the teacher's and learner's experience, and some careful research, often help.

Here is a useful activity which could be used at the start of a course, and is probably best suited to a group of four or more learners (not beginners):

The embassy party – each learner receives a card with instructions to follow, similar to those shown below:

> You are on a business trip to a foreign country. You have been asked to attend a function which is being held to celebrate the renovation of part of the embassy building. Since there are very likely to be important local guests, you are happy to attend. Circulate among the guests and socialize. You should also try to find out as much as possible about the business interests of the other people in the room.

These instructions will have to be adjusted to suit the group. For example, if the group consists of pre-experienced learners, they will need to be given information about their supposed job and company, and their reasons for being in the country. If the group consists of a group of learners from the same company, the teacher can give everyone roles, including names and company details (a competitor's details might be interesting to use!). If the group consists of learners who come from different companies, the setting might be changed so that they are in the country they are currently in. Each person then plays themselves and their own companies. In this situation you may like to make the activity more realistic by giving everyone an email from their boss, as follows:

> **From:** Your boss
> **To:** You
> **Subject:** Embassy function
>
> I have been invited to an embassy party (details following) which is being held to celebrate the renovation of part of the building. Unfortunately I can't go, so I would like you to attend on my behalf. It's a great chance to meet some of the local people and find out more about the business scene – and to make good contacts which may come in useful later.
>
> Could you send me a few notes about the people you meet? Thanks.

The teacher's role is to circulate and make notes of weak language, with suggestions for possible improvements. Good examples should also be recorded and referred to in the follow-up discussion. Of course, there is nothing to stop the teacher taking part in the simulation; he or she could play the ambassador!

Storytelling

Telling anecdotes in an engaging or amusing way is often a key part of effective socializing. Storytelling can be practised by encouraging learners to tell anecdotes about their own personal experiences, or by using pictures, or prompts to guide them through a story. Perhaps one of the most useful resources in the classroom is the teacher; for the teacher to tell a personal anecdote, record it, and for the learners then to listen again, focusing on useful language, is just one way to provide natural language. Below is an example of such a text, which can be exploited in various ways (not only in listening practice). Here are some possible approaches to using the text:

Learners listen to the original recording and then repeat the story.

Learners read the text and then repeat the story.

The teacher turns the text into a gap-fill exercise by removing some words.

The teacher divides the story up into three or four parts, and asks learners to put the parts in the right order (a scrambled text task).

Learners identify phrases or expressions in the text which they might find useful when they tell a story themselves.

Learners mark on the text where they think pauses should be, and underline words which they feel need to be emphasized. They then read the story aloud to the class.

You know, this reminds me of the time I was in erm Hong Kong, and I erm last year I think it was. Anyway, what happened was this. We were at this conference, and erm we were all standing there, in fact we were were sitting there listening to erm a talk, and the talk by the main by the main speaker who erm went over the the time erm and what happened was that the organizer, a very nice man actually, I spoke to him later, but anyway, the organizer stood up, erm picked up the microphone, and said to everybody that because the speaker had gone on a little bit too long, erm, we would move the whole programme erm forward. Erm, except that instead of saying ten minutes for some reason he said forty minutes. None of us understood this, but we all said, fair enough, he's the organizer. And of course we then had something like a thirty minute break, so we we all went off to the coffee room and had a very nice time drinking coffee. And of course what happened was that the people who hadn't been in that session erm were told that we were going to have a ten minute erm postponement of all the sessions. And so all these groups went to their sessions at erm different times erm until lunchtime. So it was all a bit of a mess, really.

Finally, here is a simulation (very close to reality) which might easily take place on a residential course:

Meet the guest speaker – having taught some of the skills and language of small talk and social chit-chat, invite a good English speaker to come and give a talk on a product, a company, or some other topic relevant to the learners. Afterwards, invite the guest to have lunch or dinner with the learners. The ensuing conversation should simulate the socializing that the learners have to do in their real jobs when the teacher is not present. As the teacher, we can monitor the conversation and feed what we learn from the experience into our subsequent teaching.

Small talk

As linguist Deborah Tannen observes, 'talk at work is not confined to talk about work'. Much of non-work talk is what we might call *small talk*. Making small talk is a skill which can be called upon at any point during the day, and during any business activity, as well as when socializing. Here are some occasions when small talk might be expected:

- while waiting at the photocopier
- just before a meeting is to start
- during a meeting, when the coffee and biscuits are brought in
- while waiting to say goodbye
- when meeting someone unexpectedly in a corridor
- while waiting in someone's office for someone else to arrive
- during a guided tour of a company's offices, or factory, or retail outlets
- socializing with a client

Small talk requires the learner to engage in polite conversation with someone, often with no prior warning; we expect to hear a phrase like 'OK, everyone, let's get down to business', but we would not expect anyone to say 'OK, everyone, let's get down to small talk'! Small talk usually involves talking about (often banal) subjects that have little to do with business. It seems to have different functions, including relationship building, time-filling, filling a silence, easing the transition from one business topic to another, and easing tension in a complex or difficult negotiation. Sometimes it emphasizes an already existing relationship between people; for example, when a senior person meets a more junior member of staff in the lift, it might be the senior person who decides whether or not to engage in small talk and what the topic should be. Another important characteristic is that small talk evolves during an interaction, and how it evolves depends on the reaction of the other person. In other words, as in any conversation, small talk requires contributions from, and is shaped by, more than one person.

Luckily for teachers, small talk probably happens naturally in the classroom, at least between the teacher and one or more learners. For example, the teacher might ask someone if they had a good weekend while the class is waiting for all the participants to arrive. Or two learners might be chatting away in their own language about a particular football match, and the teacher might interrupt with a comment like, 'Good game, was it?',

which has the effect of starting a brief conversation in English about a football match, before the class moves on to the 'main' business of 'learning English'. Teachers need to be aware that small talk happens in this way, and should be prepared to interject with prompts or comments during the lesson in order to encourage learners to practise this key skill.

However, sometimes learners will specifically ask for help in this area, and the teacher will need to be prepared to organize activities which generate such talk. Here are some activities, suitable for pre-intermediate learners upwards, which can be adapted to suit a particular teaching context:

Small talk in pairs – each pair of learners gets one card (see below) to share. After reading it, they start a conversation. Once finished, they then find a new partner and another role-card, and engage in another conversation. The teacher observes and gives feedback as appropriate. Note that the learners should be standing up for the first three of these situations.

You are standing in the lift with one other person when it stops between two floors. One of you presses the button for assistance. Then you look at each other. **What do you say?**	You are queuing to get into work, and notice that the security guard is checking identity cards more thoroughly than usual. You catch the eye of the person next to you. **What do you say?**
You are walking down the corridor when you bump into an English-speaking business partner you know reasonably well from a recent project. **What do you say?**	You are sitting in the canteen, enjoying a cup of coffee, when a colleague sits opposite you and catches your eye. **What do you say?**

Small talk in small groups – each learner gets a topic card and starts a conversation about that topic. Other learners join in as appropriate. The teacher asks the class to keep the conversation going for at least one minute.

The view out of the window	A film you have seen recently
The layout of the room	A recent business trip
The weather	A sports event
Recent news	The coffee you are drinking
The food in the company canteen	Your last holiday

Speaking on the telephone

Answering the telephone can strike terror into the heart of any language learner. Firstly, the call normally comes when the learner is in the middle of something else, so there is no time to prepare. Secondly, there is no body language to help the learner understand what the caller is trying to say.

What makes a 'good' phone call? From a business point of view, a good phone call has a clear aim; for example, it keeps the customer happy, or succeeds in persuading the customer, or allows information to be passed on accurately. Both interlocutors contribute to this process, yet, in business, a phone call should not be allowed to fail just because the other person's telephone skills are poor. So a phone call must be *managed* in order to achieve the business aim.

It is also important to realize that some types of calls are actually quite easy to deal with. Consider the secretary who simply has to put a call through to the boss, for example. Or the customer who calls to say they are going to be late. Useful phrases for this kind of conversation can be learned relatively easily.

At lower levels, telephone training often falls into two main parts. There are some **standard lexical phrases** which have to be learned, and which are useful in many contexts (*I'll just put you through, Can I take a message?, I'm calling about ...*). And there are the **survival strategies** which allow the learner to control the conversation and deal with the situation (*I didn't quite catch that, could you say that again please?, Could you spell that?, Could you confirm that in writing?*). These can be presented in quite different ways; some teachers prefer to follow a set list of typical functions, such as *getting through*, *taking and leaving messages*, or *clarifying information*. Other teachers might choose to follow a more task-based approach, using role-plays to find out where weaknesses lie, and then addressing those weaknesses. Some might choose to discuss telephone skills in the learners' own language first because, like all the skills in this chapter, it is difficult to separate the language from the overall communication skill. As always, the approach depends on the teacher's style, the learners' needs, and the context.

Here are some training techniques for improving telephoning skills:

- Role-play phone calls: ensure there is no eye contact (e.g. sitting back-to-back), and give the learners something to hold. Record the role-plays.

- Phone the learners at their place of work, and record the conversation for later review and discussion.

- Give learners lots of practice of listening to speech without visual cues.

Whatever activities are chosen, the teacher should make sure that the learners experience repeated *success* – confidence is key to this skill.

On page 67 are four sets of role-play cards which can be easily adapted for use in most classroom situations. At lower levels, the key advantage of such role-play activities is that learners get the chance to repeat key lexis over and over again until it becomes second nature, which allows them to concentrate on the caller's concerns when they need to use the telephone in a real situation. The first two of the following four activities are suitable for beginners or pre-intermediate students; the later activities, suitable for intermediate level upwards, get progressively more challenging. Most of these activities require use of a tape recorder, or digital voice recorder.

Leaving a message – each learner is given five minutes to read and memorize their card, before returning it to the teacher. They then record their message without the other learners listening (so two rooms should be available, or a room and a corridor). Once all learners have recorded their messages, the class is invited to listen to all the recordings and note down the messages. Finally, the original messages are displayed for learners to check. As a variation, instead of giving cards to learners to memorize, the teacher may opt to read the messages aloud, with the learner taking notes.

Please leave the following message on the answering machine:

Taneko needs the spare cable on site by April 3. Please arrange for transport plus driver to be on standby from April 1 to carry out delivery.

Don't forget to leave your own name and contact details too!

Please leave the following message on the answering machine:

Mr Johnson has been delayed in Hong Kong, and will now be arriving on flight CX 368, ETA 15:55. Please organize pick-up.

Don't forget to leave your own name and contact details too!

Please leave the following message on the answering machine:

The newly installed fire alarms will be tested on Thursday September 5, between 10–11 am. Please ensure staff are aware of all relevant fire drills.

Don't forget to leave your own name and contact details too!

Please leave the following message on the answering machine:

The amended contract for the Jalewo-Kantoko project has arrived, but the first three pages are missing. Please re-send asap.

Don't forget to leave your own name and contact details too!

Simple phone conversations – the teacher gives each learner a number of cards (e.g. A1, B2, C1, but not cards with the same letter). The learners read their cards, and have a chance to clarify words or phrases with the teacher. Learners then carry out the role-play indicated on one of their cards, pairing up with someone who has the card with the same letter. Once this is done, learners carry out another conversation with a new partner and a new card. At the end of each conversation they swap cards. Eventually, each learner will have worked from each card (the aim is for them to do each conversation as caller and receiver). The review might include the teacher asking a pair to repeat one of the conversations.

A1 – caller
You work for XYZ Ltd. Call ABC Inc. and ask to speak to the director. You want to know about working together on a project in Paris. If the director is not available, leave your name and telephone number, and a message for her to call you back.

A2 – receiver
You are alone in the office (all the others are in an English lesson). Your director is on holiday for the next two weeks. Answer the phone.

B1 – caller
You work for JY Enterprises in London. You sent some brochures to ABC GmbH in Berlin last week. Ask if they arrived and whether they are in good condition.

B2 – receiver
You are in the office. It is a normal day. The postman has just delivered a large, securely wrapped parcel of brochures from a company in London. Answer the phone.

C1 – caller
You work for Spirolli Servizi S.p.A. in Italy. Call Sagin SA and ask to speak to someone from accounts. There is a problem with a bill which has not been paid.

C2 – receiver
You are alone in the office (all the others are in an office party). If the telephone rings, take a message.

Clarifying the contract – in this example, the role-play has been set up using an extract from authentic documents provided by the company (railway equipment manufacturers). Each learner gets one card, and a copy of the contract. Once they have had a chance to familiarize themselves with the materials, Learner A calls Learner B. The teacher records the conversation, and the activity is followed by feedback.

Learner A
Your boss has just received a draft installation contract from XYZ Suppliers Co., and is not sure about the word 'adequate' in the clause below. For example, does this mean that your company is responsible for controlling city traffic flow around the entrance to the site? Call XYZ and ask for clarification (examples from previous projects would be ideal).

4.8 ACCESS The Buyer shall provide adequate and safe access to its site to enable the Seller to fulfill its obligations under this Contract.

Learner B
You are sitting at your desk looking through the attached contract, when the phone rings. Answer it.

(Attached: copy of contract)

At a higher level of language competence it is possible to create quite complex role-plays. Here is an example, which incorporates elements of intercultural training. The review will include discussion of possible options.

Delay at the border – each learner gets a card, and ten minutes to read about the situation. Learner A then calls Learner B. The teacher records the conversation, and the activity is followed by feedback and discussion.

Learner A

You work in a sales department of a large multinational company with customers all over the world. Because of the international nature of your business, your department is required to have someone staffing the phone 24 hours a day. Tonight it is your turn. It is now 2 am. Your boss has called to tell you that he has just received a call from one of your sub-suppliers. It seems that an important consignment has been delayed at a border post somewhere in the Middle East. The driver may have been arrested. He asks you to call the border post and to find out (a) the reason for the delay, (b) the location and status of the driver, and (c) when the consignment will be released. He thinks that it is probably just a mistake in the paperwork, and asks you to point out to whoever you speak to that the consignment is urgent and must get through tonight. You are to call him back with a progress report within the hour.

Call the border post.

Learner B

You are a customs official at a border post somewhere in the Middle East. You have just finishing searching a lorry which is carrying a load of sealed metal containers. One of your colleagues found a half bottle of whisky underneath the driver's seat, and it appears that the driver may have been drinking. You placed the driver under arrest, and are now looking through the paperwork to make sure that the lorry is carrying what it is supposed to be carrying. So far you have discovered that the export licence for the goods is out of date, and that one container seems to be missing. You now realize that a thorough check will probably take a few days, depending on how many vehicles come through the post.

The phone rings. Answer it.

Presentations

Presentations are communication situations where one person is speaking, while others listen. In this sense, nearly every time a person speaks, he or she could be said to be giving a presentation. But, even if we exclude this most general sense of the word, there is still a huge range of situations in which presentations are given. A small, informal meeting over a cup of coffee can include small, informal presentations (one person standing at the flipchart, speaking, while the others listen). Giving a talk to an audience of 300 is also a presentation. On occasion, verbal skill might be essential, but in some presentations the focus is almost completely on the visual aids being used (technical presentations are typical of this), rather than on the language spoken. The presenter's role here is different, because most of the

content may actually be in the visual information, not in what the presenter has to say.

Presentation skills are particularly interesting to teach because once again the line between language and other skills is blurred. Most business English teachers have listened to learners giving perfect presentations (from a linguistic point of view), but who were so monotonous and boring that they would have lost the audience immediately. Likewise, good speakers with the right personal style, who can entertain and inform their audience, can get away with a lot in terms of linguistic (in)competence. The aim of a presentation is to get through to the audience – anything else is secondary. Of course, in many situations the audience is primarily interested in the content (rather than the presenter), which is good news for many of our learners. The audience may be willing to forgive language problems, if the message, or the content, is clear or valuable. But if the presenter is good, so much the better. Teachers who concentrate on language alone are doing their learners a disservice if they are not pointing out other aspects. These may include delivery, content, use of visual aids, and even body language.

Context

As ever, the first thing we need to do is to make sure we understand the context in which our learners have to give presentations. Here is a checklist of possible questions to ask:

- Who is the audience? What might be their expectations?
- What experience does the learner have?
- What is the theme of the presentation?
- What does the presenter want the audience to get from the presentation?
- What facilities are available?
- What aids is the presenter planning to use?

Structure

Another point is the organization of the presentation – what component parts it is made up of, and how they relate to each other. Most audiences, particularly non-native speakers, appreciate a structure which is easy to follow. Many successful presentations consist simply of three parts: an introduction, a middle section (which usually contains the main substance), and a conclusion. Others may be more complicated. A sales presentation, for example, might be divided into the following stages:

1 Arousal of interest.
2 A description of the problem that needs solving.
3 A solution.
4 Advantages of this particular solution.
5 A statement about what the audience has to do next in order to be able to enjoy the solution.

Most presenters would agree that the opening part of a presentation is particularly important because it sets the tone for what is to come. Here is a list of what might be included at this stage of a presentation:

- welcome
- introduction of speakers
- topic
- aim
- outline
- duration of the talk
- benefit to the audience
- dealing with questions
- joke (acceptable or even expected in certain cultures, but only recommended if the learner is a good joke teller!)

It is hard to get far in business without having to give some kind of presentation, so part of the business English teacher's task is to help learners prepare their presentations. Here is a framework which might be used:

> **Topic:**
> **Aim:**
> **Main points:**
>   1
>   2
>   3
> **Main message (conclusion):**
> **Benefit to audience:**

Language for presentations

There is certain language, often called **signposting**, which is used in each of the sections of a structure, to help guide a listener through the presentation. Typical signposts are: *So, Right then, let's start, To conclude, I'd just like to go back to ...* . One way to focus on such items is to get learners to listen to professional presenters, and to listen out for how these signposts are used to manage the presentation. Teachers should note that many commercial materials available on the market also include recordings which allow the practice of such language.

At higher levels, it is often possible to teach **rhetorical** language, such as **tripling** (*Our computers are fast, reliable, and inexpensive*), **emphasizing** (e.g. use of lexis like *really, absolutely, extremely*), **rhetorical questions** (*What does this mean? Let me tell you ...*), and so on. **Metaphors** and **anecdotes** may help to make a presentation easier to understand, or a particular point more memorable. And it is always useful to practise language and techniques for dealing with **questions**.

Using the voice

The key to any presentation is not the vocabulary, or the structure, or the wonderful slides. The key is the **voice**. It's not *what* the presenter says, it is *how* they say it, that often determines the success of a presentation. So, many teachers spend a significant amount of time working on delivery techniques such as **intonation**, **stress**, and **chunking**.

- **Intonation** is about how the voice rises and falls in pitch during speech. It is related to culture, so that a German speaker, say, might sound monotonous to an English listener, but quite lively to a Japanese. One way to explore this aspect is to ask learners to read short texts in strange ways – too fast, too slow, too loud. They should be encouraged to experiment. The idea is to make them more aware of their own voices.

- **Stress** has to do with where speakers put the emphasis on particular words, or on specific syllables within the words. Learners need to understand how altering the stress patterns changes the meaning of the sentences:

> WE plan to deliver next month.
> (*as compared to the incompetents in the department next door*)
> We PLAN to deliver next month.
> (*but we're not sure if it will happen that way*)
> We plan to DELIVER next month.
> (*as opposed to start production*)
> We plan to deliver NEXT month.
> (*not this month, and not in two months' time*)
> We plan to deliver next MONTH.
> (*not next week, nor next year*)

- **Chunking** is how words are characteristically grouped together in spoken utterances (see page 9). Training in this involves teaching learners how to identify such 'chunks' and insert pauses at the appropriate places. An excellent way to bring this message across is to get learners to listen to a well-known politician or business leader giving a speech (if the teacher can provide a transcript, so much the better). Learners could be asked to predict where the pauses (and stress, and rises and falls in intonation) will be, and then to compare their predictions to the real version.

Preparing for presentations

Techniques such as using PowerPoint™, using the OHP (overhead projector), referring to prompt cards, and preparing a presentation can be covered in the training; body language and vocal techniques may also need to be covered. Learners should have access to the same tools as in real life; if they normally use laptops or visualizers, then the teacher should make sure they have them when they are practising. If they are asked to prepare a presentation in class, then they should be given enough time. And it is certainly worthwhile encouraging **rehearsals**; most professional presenters do this as a matter of course, although it is not always relevant to a business context which might demand a more impromptu performance.

One of the best ways to teach presentation skills is to get learners to give actual presentations. Here the video camera can be one of the teacher's best tools, although it is important to know how to deal with the technology

before the class starts. It is easy to make silly mistakes like forgetting to switch on the microphone, or pointing the camera at a learner who is standing in front of a window, resulting in a black picture. This can be frustrating and embarrassing. Another technique to use is to get the other learners to go through a checklist of points as they listen to a presentation. Here is an example:

- **Aids** (materials, OHP, laptop, pointer, flipchart)
- **Rapport** (eye contact, body language, mannerisms, humour)
- **Delivery** (clarity, pronunciation, stress, pauses, volume, intonation)
- **Language** (accuracy, vocabulary, appropriacy, simplicity)

For business English teachers to increase their professionalism and credibility in this key business skill, a valuable strategy is to give some formal presentations themselves (this will feel quite different from teaching a class or running a workshop). A teacher could try giving a presentation to peers at a conference, for example. Ideally, such presentations would include using the technology which that particular teacher's learners are expected to use. For example, if the learners use PowerPoint™, the teacher should become familiar with what it can do. Such a strategy will probably result in teachers learning more about giving presentations than any book will teach them, and they can use this experience to inform the way they work with students who are preparing for presentations of their own.

Meetings In business, people have meetings all the time, but once again it is important to realize that there are many different types. There are large **formal** meetings, with a chairperson, and someone responsible for taking the minutes, and there are **informal** meetings over a cup of tea. Meetings with customers will not be the same as meetings with partners, which will in turn not be the same as internal departmental meetings.

The very notion of a meeting can mean something different in different cultures. In some countries, a meeting is used to lay down the basis for consultation and discussion. In others, meetings are used primarily to present the boss's opinion or transmit corporate directives. In some cultures, meetings will follow a carefully organized plan, while in others the way they develop will depend on the issues raised or the people involved. Sometimes people will focus entirely on the business of the meeting, whereas at other times the meeting may be one of several things happening at that time (e.g. phone calls, private conversations, interruptions).

So the **language of meetings** can be equally varied. In formal meetings, there are certain lexical items which are quite common, such as *Has everyone got a copy of the minutes?*, or *Moving on to item three on the agenda ... .* Unfortunately, many business English coursebooks have presented language that can seem stilted or unnatural. Coursebook language for interrupting may include rather laboured phrases like *Excuse me, can I interrupt please?*, instead of *but ...* , while it is suggested that people should give opinions by saying *In my opinion*, instead of *I think ...* . Of course, such phrases are possible, but they are not necessarily the most common, particularly among native speakers. Research has shown that key language items in such cases

are words like *OK?* (meaning, *Do you agree?*), *OK* (for *I agree*), or *About …* (when we want to talk about a particular topic). It is probably not worth spending too much time on convoluted phrases which might appear, and far more useful to practise the language and skills that actually occur in meetings. Normally people in meetings are doing things like **passing on information**, **persuading**, **justifying**, **defending their position**, or **arguing**. So the language teacher's focus should reflect this. Other common functions include **clarifying** (*So what you're saying is …* , *That isn't exactly what I meant*, *Do you mean … ?*) and **summarizing** (*Can we just recap?*, *Let me just go over that again.*).

Role-plays and simulations which come close to what the learners do in real life will obviously be the most useful, so one of the first things to do is decide how to approach the topic in the classroom, and which type of meeting to focus on. For example, with a large group of pre-experience learners it might be worth spending some time explaining different types of meeting before going on to form small groups who role-play scenarios set by the teacher. Here are a couple of ways to set up such an exercise:

- **Meeting role-play** – the teacher gives each learner a copy of an agenda and some background information, together with a role-card which gives specific information which the learner will need during the meeting, including opinions about the issues being discussed. This information is not available to other learners in the group, which makes the whole role-play more realistic.

- **Meeting simulation** – another option is to present the learners with background information, and then allow them to play themselves, thus creating a simulation rather than a role-play (see the discussion in Chapter 4). For example, they could be asked to organize a conference in a hotel, and then be given access to the hotel websites in order to gather relevant information before coming together to find the best solution.

With a small group of experienced managers, on the other hand, it might make more sense to design the meeting simulations around the types of meetings the managers actually participate in (in an ideal situation the teacher might get permission to observe such events).

Points to consider when designing meeting simulations include:

- Who is to chair the meeting, if it is to be chaired at all?
- What is the chair's role?
- What contributions are to be made by participants in the meeting?
- What is the function of the meeting (e.g. to discuss issues, brainstorm, find solutions to problems, give out tasks, make decisions, pass on information, and so on)?
- How formal will it be (e.g. strict rules of procedure)?
- Will there be a tight structure (e.g. agenda, timings)?
- Will minutes be produced? If so, who is responsible?

Here is an example of materials which might be used to set up a simulation.

To: You
From: Assistant Manager
Subject: Forwarded message re. costs

Hi Guys,
John has just sent me this email. It's self-explanatory, I think. I suggest we meet on Monday at 3pm in the large conference room. An hour should suffice.
Kevin

....

Original message
To: Assistant Manager
From: Manager
Subject: Cost reduction

Hi Kevin
As you know, we need to reduce costs within GR45. I believe it is time we re-examined the way we carry out production reviews – there are clearly areas we can improve.

As you also know, I am on holiday for the next three weeks. While I am away I would like you to get together with the project team leaders, and come up with suggestions for improvement:

The following questions may be useful to you in your discussions:

– Is everyone clear about the way we do reviews?
– Do we have enough/too many meetings?
– Do the right people go to these meetings?
– Are the participants well prepared for the meeting?
– Do participants have the necessary training and experience to carry out reviews?

Regards,
John

People who work in companies are used to receiving emails which set up meetings (the simulation mentioned above was written for a department which had just been taken over by an US company, and was undergoing English training). It gives a realistic reason for the simulation, and effectively sets up the agenda for the meeting. The topic (cost reduction, in this case) is one which was very relevant to the participants in the group. Note that there is not enough information given just in the set-up material to carry out the simulation. Because it was designed for experienced learners, the learners had to bring their own experience and knowledge, just as they do in real life.

Learners can also be asked to take minutes of meetings held in the class. This mirrors what happens in real life, and the discussions about whose minutes are the most accurate will inevitably generate additional useful language because the learners are no longer playing a role, but having to defend their own work. Alternatively, learners can be asked to bring authentic minutes into class, and then use these to explain what happened in the meeting to the other learners.

Negotiating   Negotiation is something which many people do regularly on a day-to-day basis. It is what is done when the family discusses which TV programme to watch, or when a couple decide what to eat for dinner, or when the neighbours play their music too loud. Business people negotiate prices and delivery dates. Politicians negotiate over spending public funds. Diplomats negotiate borders and international trade treaties.

Negotiation is about bargaining with another party to get something we want. Sometimes compromise will be necessary. Sometimes one side has all the power and can call the shots. Sometimes there will be conflict, and sometimes clear mutual interests. Negotiations are, in effect, nothing more than a special form of meeting, and so much of the language used is similar to that discussed in the previous section. But it is possible to argue that most negotiations can be divided into certain categories or types, and that these negotiations go through certain stages; it is useful to examine these in a bit more detail in order to better understand the language which might be used.

Types of negotiation

There are basically two types of negotiation. **Distributive**, **competitive**, or **win–lose** negotiating involves a situation where the negotiating parties have directly opposing goals, or at least there is some sort of conflict, often regarding price or how limited resources should be shared. The long-term relationship with the other party may not be important; if there is only one deal, what is important is getting the best deal possible. Buying a house or a car might be an example of this. Each side has a position which they want to defend; any gains made by party A are regarded as a loss by party B.

In contrast, **integrative** or **win–win** negotiating seeks goals which are not mutually exclusive. This sort of negotiation is characterized by discussion and exploration where parties focus on what they have in common, and actively seek out alternative solutions. The aim is to concentrate on needs and interests, not positions, and to seek outcomes where A and B both gain.

An example may make this distinction clear. Here are two sales executives discussing price:

A: I'm sorry, but I can't go below 10,000.
B: But my boss has set me a limit of 8000.

The two negotiators have made clear what their positions are. Seeing it as a win–lose situation, they have quickly reached an impasse.

Here is the same pair, but they have taken on a win–win perspective:

A: I'm sorry, but I can't go below 10,000.
B: 10,000 is a problem for us. Can you explain why 10,000 is so important?
A: We have just spent a lot on new plant, and we need to pay the bank which gave us a loan for this. They are putting quite a lot of pressure on us.
B: Ah, that's interesting. Which bank are you using?
A: Rich Brothers plc.
B: Ah. Perhaps we can help by speaking to the bank ourselves. We are major customers.
A: That would be great.

Successful integrative negotiators (such as the second speaker above) explore the needs and interests behind the position, and find a way forward. Most negotiations are neither wholly distributive nor wholly integrative; it is more of a continuum. One of the key skills of any negotiator is the ability to recognize potential for moving away from a win–lose situation to win–win.

Stages in negotiation

Negotiations go through a series of stages, and understanding these stages is useful in trying to work out potentially useful language. The following table illustrates what might be involved:

- *Preparation:* deciding what is important, defining goals, thinking ahead how to work together with the other party.
- *Relationship building:* getting to know the other party, understanding how you and the other are similar and different, and building commitment toward achieving a mutually beneficial set of outcomes.
- *Information gathering:* learning what you need to know about the issues, about the other party and their needs, about the feasibility of possible settlements, and about what might happen if you fail to reach agreement with the other side.
- *Information using:* at this stage, negotiators assemble the case they want to make for their preferred outcomes and settlement, one that will maximize the negotiator's own needs. This presentation is often used to 'sell' the negotiator's preferred outcome to the other.
- *Bidding:* the process of making moves from one's initial, ideal position to the actual outcome. Bidding is the process by which each party states their opening offer, and then makes moves in that offer, towards a middle ground.
- *Closing the deal:* the objective here is to build commitment to the agreement achieved in the previous phase. Both the negotiator and the other party have to assure themselves that they reached a deal they can be happy with, or at least live with.
- *Implementing the agreement:* determining who needs to do what once the hands are shaken and the documents signed. Not uncommonly, parties discover that the agreement is flawed, key points were missed, or the situation has changed and new questions exist. Flaws in moving through the earlier phases arise here, and the deal may have to be reopened, or issues settled by arbitrators or the courts.

From *Managing Strategic Relationships* by Greenhalgh

Language and other negotiating skills

Identifying the key language for use in negotiations can sometimes be quite difficult. Business English coursebooks often concentrate on functional areas like clarifying, summarizing, asking questions, proposing, agreeing and disagreeing, but these give a limited appreciation of where the difficulties are. Many of the real pressures on the learners have nothing to do with the

language – there may be a boss who wants certain results, or there may be a promotion which depends on how the negotiation goes, or there may be a vagueness about what your own side really wants. And no negotiator ever has enough information about the other side's real motivations and desires.

Negotiations are also about people and personalities, so relationship-building skills are vital. We have probably all walked away from a negotiation with a used-car salesman or streetmarket trader (or something similar) having paid considerably more than we had intended to. If the person we are negotiating with comes across as a 'nice guy', it is much harder to turn him down when he makes his offer.

Perhaps the best way, then, to practise negotiations is to adopt a task-based approach, that is, to do role-plays and simulations in class. These allow the development of non-linguistic negotiating skills, as well as providing opportunities to practise relevant language. The camera is a very useful tool for reviewing activities, although it is also possible to use observers to watch the negotiation and give feedback.

Here is a simple role-play scenario:

Partner A

You are the chief purchaser for your company. You are interested in ordering a quantity of desks from a new supplier. Here is a summary of your aims:

- You need 20 executive desks and 3 super executive desks within 30 days.
- You need 50 standard desks within 60 days.
- You wish to have a 10% discount (it is a large order, after all). 20% would be better.
- You do not wish to pay for delivery and assembly.
- You want 30 days' credit.

Partner B

You are a salesman for a company that produces office furniture. A new customer has asked you to visit them and discuss a possible large order. Here is a summary of your company's terms of payment and delivery:

- Your standard delivery terms are 60 days. This can be changed to 30 days, but this increases the price to the customer by 10%.
- Your standard payment terms are 50% on order, and 50% on delivery.
- You give discounts on large orders as follows: 100 items – 3%; 200 items – 5%; 300 items – 7%.
- Catalogue prices include delivery, but not assembly (3% extra).

This is typical of the sort of role-play often found in coursebooks; each side has specific goals, but there is some flexibility regarding which goals have the highest priority. Both sides cannot have everything they want, so the idea is that they will negotiate to find compromises giving something to each side.

The beauty of such role-plays is that they are very easy to set up. Most business English learners will have no problem understanding the situation, and will be able to explore the issues and find the solution. It is also relatively easy to adapt such role-plays to suit our own class.

Unfortunately, there are a range of factors which make such negotiation role-play unrealistic. Most obviously, the participants know it is not for real.

Also, the information given lacks substance, so that the participants cannot really explore alternatives in any depth or detail. They may need to invent information which they haven't been given, and this can be frustrating for all concerned. For example, what are the reasons for the delivery dates? Why does one side want credit? Why a discount for 100 desks, and not for 50?

Ideally, a negotiation role-play will give as much background information as possible. The scenario might reflect a real business situation, or at least be checked for verisimilitude by job-experienced learners. The teacher should allow enough time for preparation, and should make sure that learners understand the situation and their own roles. Motivation can be increased by telling them that the other side is 'really taking things seriously'.

One way to practise negotiations with an experienced learner is as follows:

1 Teacher asks learner to explain background to negotiations that he/she does.
2 Teacher role-plays one side, learner role-plays the other (preferably own).
3 Discussion and comment on tactics and language used.
4 Teacher and learner exchange roles and role-play again.
5 Discussion and comment on tactics and language used.
6 Step 2 repeated.

(Adapted from comments made to the author by Mark Powell)

Reverse role simulations of this kind enable learner and teacher to maximally contribute their knowledge and expertise to the task.

Here is another role-play. Although the issues may not be related to the learners' everyday business requirements, this role-play is in many ways more realistic than the buyer–seller scenarios above. This time the learners do have the necessary background knowledge, and have to explain their ideas clearly and come up with a solution that is agreeable to both sides.

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4 You are going to participate in a negotiation to agree on the appropriate level of tobacco advertising in your country. Work in two groups, group A and group B. Follow the instructions below and prepare for the negotiation.

Group A (anti-smoking lobby)	**Group B (pro-smoking lobby)**
Task 1: Prepare a short presentation on the dangers of smoking.	**Task 1:** Prepare a short presentation on why you support the right to smoke.
Task 2: Prepare to negotiate with the pro-smoking lobby. Decide where you are happy to compromise. Try to agree on an acceptable level of advertising in:	**Task 2:** Prepare to negotiate with the anti-smoking lobby. Decide where you are happy to compromise. Try to agree on an acceptable level of advertising in:
T.V. *(definitely no)*	T.V. *(late at night)*
Cinema *(only to accompany restricted films)*	Cinema *(all adult films)*
Newspapers *(no – read by all public)*	Newspapers *(all)*
Magazines *(only certain ones)*	Magazines *(all except children's)*
Billboards *(not within 3km of schools)*	Billboards *(not within 1km of schools)*

5 Hold the negotiation, following the agenda below.

Agenda

1 Welcome / Aim
2 Short presentation: pro-smoking lobby
3 Short presentation: anti-smoking lobby
4 Negotiation *(TV / cinema / newspapers / magazines / billboards)*
5 Summary and action plan

From *In-company Intermediate* by Powell

Conclusions   This chapter has focused on how to teach key business speaking skills:
- socializing
- small talk
- telephoning
- presentations
- meetings
- negotiations

Looking ahead   The next chapter will focus on writing skills, which for some learners is all the contact that they will have with English in their work.

Teaching business writing skills

- **Business writing**
- **Correspondence**
- **Contracts**
- **Reports**
- **CVs**
- **Agendas and minutes**
- **Writing for the Internet**

Business writing

Writing is a key part of the day-to-day activities of most businesses and, like speaking, is used in a vast range of different situations. It allows communication across time and space, and provides an invaluable medium for storing records and other information. Written communication offers different challenges from spoken interaction. In one way, writing is easier than speaking, in that it is not usually spontaneous and near-instantaneous. There is time to think about what the sender has sent and what the reply should contain. On the other hand, speaking is more natural, and writing more contrived; it is a skill that needs to be learned. Writing requires planning and organizational skills, as well as skills in linking paragraphs and sentences together, skills in spelling, punctuation, word order, word choice, and so on.

Approaches to teaching writing

There are many theories as to how writing is best taught. Some teachers see writing as a problem-solving process which can involve brainstorming ideas, structuring the selected ideas, drafting and redrafting, getting feedback from peers, and so on. Teachers may ask learners to work through these stages in a writing task so that the learners can master these various skills. This kind of **process** approach probably works best with higher-level students who already have a reasonable command of the language. But at almost any level, teachers can help learners develop as writers in this way by acting as a language resource, and more importantly, by providing **feedback**. Such feedback might include advice on dealing with the various stages of the process (mentioned above) or on issues of language (such as appropriate or accurate use of expressions, lexis, or grammar), as well as providing an overall evaluation of the end result.

An alternative approach to the teaching of writing is the **genre** (or **text**) approach, which was briefly mentioned in Chapter 1. The underlying theory here is that texts of a certain type, e.g. *letters*, have the same kind of

purpose as each other and show similar language and features. Letters are different, in these terms, from *reports*, which in turn are different from *agendas*. A genre like *letters* can be divided into sub-genres like *letters of persuasion*, *letters of enquiry*, *letters of confirmation*, and so on. Some teachers argue against a genre approach, saying that the notion of genre is too vague to be of practical use to the student. After all, every letter is unique and has its own specific characteristics. Others argue that the theory of genre is useful for teachers and learners alike because it gives learners something concrete to aim for.

In a genre approach, learners are given the chance to study model texts, and to base their own writing on what they have noticed in the texts. Note that we used a similar approach in Chapter 5 to teach speaking skills. This is quite different from the process approach discussed above, for example, which allows far more creativity. Yet, since for most business English learners writing is **instrumental** (focusing on achieving a particular goal or achieving an outcome), this is probably not a major issue, particularly with lower levels. Indeed, it is rare to find even native-speaker business people starting from scratch (how many contracts are written without reference to previous ones, for example?).

Of course, it is likely that teachers will combine elements of process and genre approaches when designing lesson activities. Learners may be given the opportunity to focus on particular features, for example, and will then be asked to compose their own versions.

The structure of writing

With either approach to teaching, one aim will be to look at elements of **structure** – how paragraphs and sentences work together. There are two principal ways to do this. The first way, is to ensure **coherence**, which involves creating a logical argument or sequence which makes sense to the reader. On page 83 is an example of an exercise for advanced learners, designed to give practice at this (the correct order is written in the right-hand margin).

Secondly, **cohesion** is about how sentences connect with each other to form a sense of unity. This is done through various grammatical devices, such as conjunctions and pronouns, as well as lexical items. The following brief analysis of an extract from a press release shows how this works:

> Work on the new communication facility at Saniza Junction started in *January*. The foundations were completed in *February*, and most of the equipment had arrived by the end of *March*. *Additional* equipment, including transmitter components, *was delivered* throughout the months of *April* and *May*, and took two weeks to assemble. *Commissioning took place* in the final week of *July*, in time for President Kanaso's opening ceremony on *August* 1. *Unfortunately* the transmitter was *totally destroyed* in *November's earthquake*.

Look at the following letter, and work out the best order for the paragraphs.

Dear Ms Lee,

I also checked the dates for the travel and accommodation costs you mentioned. The trip actually took place after the contract between JK Holgings and our client was signed. In paragraph 4.2 it states that our agreement terminates when a contract is signed between JK Holgings and the client. Therefore we cannot reimburse expenses for any expenses which occurred after the contract was signed.	5
I trust this matter will not jeopardize our business relationship. We were very satisfied with your sales engineers' performance, and we fully intend to use your services again in the future if at all possible.	6
Such accusations are not to be taken lightly, particularly as we at JK Holgings pride ourselves on treating our clients and partners fairly. For this reason I have closely examined your complaints.	3
Thank you for your letter of June 28. I am deeply concerned that you feel your sales engineers have been unfairly treated by JK Holgings.	1
My investigation of your complaints led me to conclude that JK Holgings is not obliged to make the payments that you request. Let me begin by examining the non-payment for the presentation. I examined our agency agreement, and in paragraph 2.1 it clearly states that this kind of expenditure is deemed to be compensated by the commission paid to your company. Accordingly we cannot pay you extra for this presentation.	4
In your letter you said that you felt unfairly treated for two reasons. Firstly, you stated that JK Holgings refused to pay for a market analysis presentation your company gave to a potential client on our behalf. Secondly, you said that JK Holgings refused to reimburse your company for travel and accommodation expenses.	2

Yours sincerely,

Graham Thorpe

The paragraph starts off with a topic sentence which lets the reader know what the paragraph is about. The adjective *Additional* must refer back to a previous sentence if it is to make sense. Similarly, with the word *commissioning*, the reader must already know what is being talked about. The second conjunction *and* in the third sentence allows a missing *it*, and links the two clauses. The mention of *January, February, March, April, May, July, August*, and *November* offers additional links, as do the verbs in similar tense *was delivered, took, took place, was destroyed. Unfortunately* signals a change of mood (something bad is to be reported), later confirmed by the use of words like *destroyed* and *earthquake*. At a sentence level, issues such as grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation remain to be addressed.

The context of writing

Like business speaking, business writing happens in **context**; it must relate appropriately to its setting. This means that a business English writer needs to consider the audience, the purpose of the document, and the expected response, and explains why business English teachers often integrate writing skills into activities which are also designed to address other skills (simulations and case studies are typical of this). The focus is on the outcome of the task, rather than the production of the document as an end in itself.

- **Audience** – the readers of a piece of business writing may be experts, or customers, or laypersons. They may come from a different cultural context from that of the writer, and what works in one cultural setting may not work in another. For example, we have just seen that it is considered good practice to start off a paragraph with a topic sentence that explains what is to come. However, such a practice is only common in the West; in many Asian contexts, for example, it is more common to lead up to a topic gradually. The audience may also come from a different professional context. Knowing the audience will also affect the style of the letter: is it to be formal or informal, for example? Learners would probably write a letter to their favourite client differently from one to their best friend at work, even if the message is essentially the same. Furthermore, international business documents need to be kept as simple as possible if the audience is not as proficient at English as the writer.

- **Purpose** – the practical intent of the letter is of key importance. Acceptability in the business world is rarely judged by grammatical niceties, but by whether or not the document can be used. Many in-company trainers will testify to the fact that while their students may chuckle at such mistakes in letters from other companies, the reality is that sometimes it just does not matter that much. Business people are more likely to read an email and say, 'Great, we've got the contract', rather than, 'This email is unacceptable – it's full of mistakes'. This may sound an anathema to many teachers, but is nevertheless worth thinking about. Is it really worth spending hours in the classroom so that letters can be a little bit better? From a business perspective, it is probably not. Some companies have a policy about the quality of their email, preferring speed

and efficiency to linguistic accuracy (particularly with internal emails). From a feedback perspective, red-inking every mistake on a practice letter may have the effect of destroying a learner's confidence – exactly the opposite of what teachers are trying to do.

Of course, some documents do have to be very precise – contracts, for example, or minutes which will be referred to again and again. How important accuracy is depends on the purpose of the document. It also depends on the teaching context. A teacher working with pre-experienced university learners who are preparing for a written business studies exam may have to take a very different approach from that of the in-company trainer who is having to deal with the everyday practicalities of business.

Another point here has to do with the degree of vagueness of the language in the document. Sometimes writing has to be very precise; it is no good giving the wrong amount of money in a price quotation, for example, or supplying incorrect delivery dates. But sometimes sentences like, 'It looks like we should be finished by the end of June', rather than, 'We will be finished by the end of June', can be far more flexible if something goes wrong. Writers do not always wish to commit themselves in writing.

- **Response** – the expected or desired response to the writing should also be considered. If learners write a letter of complaint when they are angry or stressed, their letter may be far more direct and impolite than the one they might have otherwise written. The important thing with any document is to ensure that learners try and place themselves in the reader's shoes and ask, 'How would I respond if I had received this document?' Here are some questions which might help a business English learner assess response:
  - What is the relationship between me and my reader (or between the companies we work for)? (long term, short term, customer, partner etc)
  - What are the main issues at stake? (loss of business, profits, details on a project, loss of trust etc)
  - Is there enough information? Will my reader know what I need or want them to do?

Sample activities for teaching business writing

Here is a typical activity, designed to focus learners' attention on different genres in business writing. It was written for a group of learners whose job involved daily interaction with customers on matters of spare parts delivery.

Paired crosswords – each learner is given one of the crosswords (see page 86), and has to fill it in by asking a partner (who has the corresponding crossword) to explain the missing words without showing the crossword or stating the words directly. The group then discusses the right order that the different items might be sent in. Finally, actual examples of each type of document are examined and compared.

A

Across/down letters: a p o l o g y / e n q u i r y / q u o t a t i o n / o r d e r

B

Across/down letters: a c k n o w l e d g e m e n t / p r o p o s a l / i n v o / r e m i n d e r

There are other ways of approaching the teaching of writing. The syllabus threads offered in Chapter 3 may also be used; a structural thread might concentrate on written grammar, a lexical thread on standard phrases, a functional thread on persuading, informing, or comparing and contrasting, a situational thread on situations such as writing to a customer, applying for a job, and so on. These can be used in combination, so that grammar and lexis, say, are both covered. The following exercise, based on an authentic email, focuses on punctuation as well as on common lexical phrases.

Correcting the email – in stage one of this activity, learners are asked to punctuate the following email message:

> **Subject:** shan hi hq network problem update
>
> hi john its difficult to say what the problem is at the moment ive asked harry to run a trace i think theres possibly a problem with the customers software the pcs are using both dipos and ws6x this might be the reason the connection doesnt come up harrys going to send me his results when he finishes the trace so ill probably get back to you tomorrow some time

In stage two, learners should use the email above to help them to fill in the gaps (below) with a suitable word:

> It's difficult to say what the ...... is.
> I've asked Harry ...... send me an email.
> There's a problem ...... the software.
> I'll get back ...... you tomorrow sometime.
> This might be the ...... it doesn't work.

Here are ten more ways to adapt and use authentic documents:

• Gap-fill (remove words which learners could guess from the context, or which they need to focus on, or which form part of useful lexical phrases).

- Mixed/jumbled text (or phrases).
- Divide a number of sentences into two parts, and then ask learners to find the matching sentence halves.
- On a letter, write a few notes on what sort of response is required (e.g. 'Tell them we can't deliver before June 6', or 'inform them that the quality wasn't good enough', and so on). Learners write a follow-up letter.
- Change style from formal to informal.
- Edit text to find or correct errors.
- Summarize.
- Comprehension questions.
- Put all the verbs into infinitive form and ask learners to correct.
- Ask learner to give an oral report on the contents (with or without notes).

Correspondence

Correspondence includes writing letters, emails, mobile phone text messages, and faxes. Normally, it is interactive, in that a reply is often expected. This is different from other documents like contracts, reports, or minutes, which are statements that do not require a written reply. It is important to note that the different forms of correspondence are not necessarily separate genres, merely modes of delivery. Letters can be faxed, or sent by email. However, it is probably true to say that some emails share characteristics traditionally associated with spoken conversation. Likewise, faxes can vary; sometimes they consist of formal letters or forms, perhaps with scribbled notes on them as a method of reply, at other times they may take the form of a memo.

There are so many types of written correspondence, from scribbled notes and informal emails to formal legal contracts, as well as the multitude of different types of letters and commercial documents dealing with issues such as enquiries, offers, orders, acknowledgements, delivery, payment, delays, complaints, credit, job applications, insurance, making arrangements, and so on. Inevitably, most general coursebooks cannot go into this area in great depth, but often lists of useful phrases are included and practised, and some attention given to matters of appropriate layout and style.

Specialist books, such as Littlejohn's *Company to Company*, go a lot deeper, and use task-based approaches to act as a basis for the learning process. On page 88 is a page from the teacher's book, which gives an idea of what can be done. Note how the task involves a whole series of different letters. Learners are provided with a purpose and a context for writing, and letters which are sent by one group are received and acted upon by another. Each subsequent letter depends on what has gone before, as happens in real life. The focus is on communication, not grammatical niceties nor perfect use of expressions, although these may be brought to the learners' attention once the task is over (see page 84).

Often commercial correspondence uses **specialist terms** which teachers have to master if they are to understand what is going on. For example, Incoterms (International commercial terms) such as EXW (ex-works), or FOB (free on board), or CIF (Cost, Insurance, and Freight) are standard trade definitions published by the International Chamber of Commerce,

Activity: FROM QUOTE TO SALE

Basic plot: A company called Tavridis in Greece, wants to buy a large quantity of cable. They ask two companies, Hanston Electrics and Midtec Cables for quotes. They order from Hanston Electrics, but at the same time Hanston is writing to say they cannot supply the cable because of a fire in their suppliers' factory. Midtec writes with news of a price reduction. Hanston finds a new supplier but this comes too late and they lose the order.

STAGE 1

Card 13

TAVRIDIS Ltd
Electrical Contractor

Sends quotation (cheaper than Midtec).

Sends quotation.

Card 61

HANSTON *Electrics*

Writes again to ask for a quote for the cable.

Card 10

MIDTEC CABLES LTD

STAGE 2

Card 55

TAVRIDIS Ltd
Electrical Contractor

Accepts quotation and orders cable.

Rejects quotation.

Card 26

HANSTON *Electrics*

Writes to give bad news: there has been a fire in the factory.

Writes to give good news: the price has been reduced.

Card 71

MIDTEC CABLES LTD

STAGE 3

Card 44

TAVRIDIS Ltd
Electrical Contractor

Cancels order.

Tavridis orders from Midtec.

Card 38

HANSTON *Electrics*

Good news: they can supply the cable (but it is too late).

Asks if they would now like to order or confirms order.

Card 33

MIDTEC CABLES LTD

and are very common in commercial correspondence. Any business English teacher attempting to teach English for business correspondence would soon lose face if they were not aware of the most common terms.

Setting the right **tone** in a letter or even an email is difficult for many native speakers, and learners often need help in this area. This is hardly surprising when topics could include such tricky issues as late payment, defective goods, contract interpretations, announcing redundancies, and so on. One way to work on this language is to do consciousness-raising activities where the learners are given the chance to focus on specific aspects

of language use in authentic documents. Here are some example activities, using an extract from some formal correspondence:

> You will be interested to know that I recently met with Jack Mandon, who informed me that you are now acting as agents on behalf of his company. You will no doubt already be aware that he is very satisfied with your efforts.
>
> However, this is clearly a breach of our agreement, which was that you would act as our exclusive agents until January 2006. I therefore require your written assurance that your business relationship with Jack Mandon will cease forthwith, and that you will honour our agreement in future.
>
> If you are unable to comply with this reasonable request, then I feel I have no option but to terminate our agreement in accordance with Clause 13b.
>
> I look forward to receiving your reply by June 14.

- Ask learners to describe the function(s) of each paragraph, and identify the key words and phrases. Finish off with a class discussion.

- Remove key words/phrases from the letter. Ask learners to complete it (an alternative is to add extra words/phrases, and ask learners to delete them).

- Ask learners (having read the letter) to work in pairs and re-create the letter (without access to the original). Compare the result with the original.

- It is now June 15, and no reply has been received. Ask learners to write a follow-up letter.

- Ask learners to write two possible replies: the first is an apology, and the second a request to terminate the agreement. Compare results, focusing on tone and style. If you can get hold of the original reply, so much the better.

Here is a simple exercise designed to practise emails, which are often written quickly.

- **What would you write?** The XXX and ZZZ in the boxes on page 90 can be adjusted to suit the group the teacher is working with. Learners are given fifteen minutes to write short email responses to all of these situations, after which they compare their responses with those of their peers.

You have heard that Jane Smith, a colleague from XXX, will be visiting ZZZ next month. You need to offer to book a hotel for her.	A Spanish colleague is due to visit your city for the first time, and has asked you for some information (maps etc). Write and inform him that you are sending some items by post. You should also suggest some useful websites he might like to look at.
An American colleague in XXX would like you to visit her next week. Unfortunately you can't go.	Jon Cachett, from XXX, phoned you and asked for a map of ZZZ. You promised to send him one, with directions to your office, but you forgot. He's flying in tomorrow.
You need, by Monday morning, a copy of the minutes from a meeting your boss attended last week.	A supplier's representative has cancelled a visit, due to ill-health. Ask if he is available next month, on the 13th or the 15th.

Contracts   Written contracts are agreements which aim to lessen misunderstanding and provide a formal record for reference. They are extremely common in the business world, and often depend on fine nuances of language. Writing them would stretch many a teacher's own competence to the limit, although thankfully this task is normally left to legal experts. But reading and interpreting contracts is something which learners often have to do, along with engaging in contract-related written correspondence and amendments.

Contracts can be interpreted differently by different cultures. In some parts of the world, contracts are seen as binding documents, detailing and concluding an agreement. In other countries, they may be seen as a commitment to do business together, nothing more. Things can be changed if the situation alters.

Contracts normally include some or all of the following elements:

- Introduction with definitions and names of various parties.
- A time frame for the agreement.
- Terms of payment and delivery.
- Responsibilities and undertakings of each party.
- Insurance details in case of problems.
- Dispute resolution or arbitration arrangements.
- Appendices and other accompanying documents.

Typically, language learning work on contracts involves using worksheets (created by the teacher, or from a coursebook) in order to practise particular lexical items. An example is given at the top of the page opposite.

Other activities using contracts may tie reading and writing skills in with listening skills; for example, the learner reads through a contract and then listens to a recorded discussion before making some amendments. Or

Use these words to complete the sentences below.

outside parties, cancel, access, comply

1 The contractor shall have free ...... to the supplier's factory during normal working hours.
2 Visitors to the factory shall ...... with all safety and security regulations.
3 In the event of a work stoppage, the supplier reserves the right to ...... a visit at any point.
4 The parties to the contract undertake not to reveal confidential information to any ....

Now look at the following statements. Are they correct, incorrect, or do you need more information?

1 The contractor can visit the supplier's factory at any time.
2 The contractor must wear a helmet when visiting the supplier's factory.
3 The supplier may ask the contractor to leave the factory if production stops.
4 The contractor may not discuss the details of the visit with anyone from the supplier's company.

contracts may be used in negotiation role-plays, where the two sides clarify issues or negotiate changes.

Reports

Reports are documents which offer the reader the results of an enquiry of some sort (such as research, technical inspection, visit, and feasibility studies) or an account of some event(s). They may be written for experts or laypersons. They tend to have a standard format in most institutions, so the first thing the teacher should do is to discover the local policy, and get examples of authentic reports of the type required. If this is not possible, then there are numerous examples on the Internet. Word-processing software (such as MS Word™) sometimes includes handy templates of documents in report format.

Reports normally start off with a title, names of authors and addressees, and a purpose statement giving the reason they were produced. The body of the report is likely to include paragraphs on background, methodology of the enquiry, results, discussion, conclusions, and recommendations. A report may also include appendices, a list of references, and an index.

Here are four activities which can be done to practise report writing skills, and which require minimum preparation on the part of the teacher:

Gap-fill – remove paragraph headings or key words from important paragraphs (such as the introduction or conclusion) of a company report, and ask learners to replace them, either with their own version or with the original words (which are provided, mixed up).

Summary – ask learners to read a report (in English or in their own language) and produce a one-page executive summary (in English).

Comparing – obtain examples of different reports (from the learners or the Internet), and ask learners to compare various aspects (such as overall structure, phrases used in the introduction/conclusion, how reference is made to information in appendices, and so on). Finish off by asking learners to select ten useful phrases which they might like to use in their own reports.

Oral account to written report – a member of the class speaks, describing an event (such as an accident, a visit, the introduction of a new product) which they have been involved in, or which they have heard about. The rest of the class ask questions and take notes as necessary, and then write a brief report on the event. Finally, learners compare reports, and produce a new (improved) report as a team effort.

CVs   Business English teachers are often asked to help with the writing of a learner's curriculum vitae (called a *résumé* in the US). Not only are these vital documents for the learner concerned, but they can be difficult to get right. One reason for this is that the style (and therefore effectiveness) of a CV depends on who is going to read it. This can be especially problematic in an international setting. No hard and fast rules exist, and yet decisions have to be made about length, type (most CVs are chronological or functional), what personal information to include, and so on. Secondly, there is often conflicting advice from so-called 'experts', so what the teacher advises may be in direct conflict with advice that the learner has just downloaded from the Internet. Thirdly, CV writing is influenced by level within a company. High-level executives have CVs that look different (and not only with respect to content) from workers on the shop floor. With CVs, it is important to recognize that no one size fits all.

Yet there is a glimmer of hope. Sometimes it is possible to find out what a particular company actually wants in a CV (they may even have a standard format that they can provide). Institutions like the European Commission have created a standard document for use in Europe. Again, Microsoft Word™ comes complete with standard template formats which are commonly used.

CVs are normally sent together with a covering letter. This is the applicant's chance to highlight what they have to offer, and how they might benefit the company they are applying to. Such letters can be practised quite successfully using a genre approach. Other activities include working on the necessary lexis. Here is an exercise for CV writers (particularly those aiming at a job in the US) who need to use verbs with a positive connotation to describe their achievements.

Here is a list of possible verbs to use on your CV. Write four statements describing your achievements in the last year.
(like this: *I designed a technical modification which enabled the production line to increase its output by 12%.*)

   created   conducted   coordinated   improved   designed   assisted
         provided   addressed   established   solved

Agendas and minutes

Agendas are lists of items which are to be discussed at a meeting. The minutes are the written record of that meeting. There are many different styles, but the basic function is to record decisions made and summarize who is to do what by when. Formal minutes may include:

- Names of attendees
- Apologies (from those absent)
- Review of minutes of previous meetings
- Summary of discussions
- Record of proposals, decisions made, and voting details
- Action points and responsibilities
- Details of next meeting

Any organization will normally have three types of minutes, which can be completely different in terms of style and detail. These are:

- Minutes written to record internal meetings; these are attended by company personnel, and are only to be used internally. These can be quite informal, and may take the format of action notes (simply recording names of who is doing what by when).
- Minutes written to record meetings with outside agencies (customers or partners), but for internal use only. These will often include subjective comments.
- Minutes written to record meetings with outside agencies (customers or partners), but for shared use or publication. These are often the most formal, and may form the basis for negotiations or contracts.

Agendas also come in many shapes and sizes, but may include all or some of the following:

- Objectives
- Location
- Start and end times
- Breaks
- Details of participants, including names of chair and person responsible for minutes
- Items to be discussed (with presenters' names and time allocated)
- Details of any preparation required
- Additional information or appendices

One way to practise writing minutes is for learners to do so during a role-play designed to practise meeting skills (see Chapter 5). Learners produce minutes independently of each other, and then compare their results.

Writing for the Internet

The Internet is used increasingly for business communication purposes, both internally (as an intranet within a company), and externally, via the World Wide Web. Employees may be asked to write anything from company newsletters, to sales information on new products, to 'How to find us' information. The principles of writing for the web are different from those of many other business documents, in that design and layout play a much more overt role, and it may be necessary to link written information

to audio or video material, or to other websites. However, the need to write simple, clear English is also still there.

With some groups, it may be appropriate to ask learners to produce their own website, which can act as a record of their learning progress, or may mirror their real-life requirements (e.g. the production of a departmental flier about the Christmas party, or information about a special offer for customers). Some groups will be familiar with using **html** (a programming language which instructs the computer how to display a particular page), or commercially available software packages, which they might use to create their Internet pages. Others may not have the necessary expertise; in such cases it is possible to ask learners to produce written text on a presentation program like Microsoft's PowerPoint™, which can later be uploaded as necessary. The final decision may well also depend, to a large extent, on the teacher's own ability and interests, and the resources available.

Here are two possible activities:

Company history – learners are asked to visit a number of other company websites, and to make notes of how the company history is presented, if at all. In pairs, learners then plan a website which presents their own company history (with pre-experience learners it may be more appropriate for them to either research a company, and then produce the website, or to invent a company). Learners visit each other's websites, comparing results, and vote on the best effort, or work together on a whole group effort which combines the best features.

Presenting the class – learners take photos of themselves and prepare short written statements about why they are learning English. Their statements might also include other information, such as what they like and dislike about the classes, or their feelings about learning a foreign language. Learners also produce other information sheets, such as 'Tips on how to learn a language', 'The aims and syllabus' of the course they are on, 'Glossaries of new words and phrases' learned on the course, or examples of their written work. Finally, the learners design and build the website, incorporating this material.

Conclusions

In this chapter we have:
- noted that business writing is different from spoken interaction.
- looked at a process approach, which divides the writing into stages such as brainstorming, drafting, and editing.
- discussed a genre approach, which relies on models of language as a starting point.
- examined different types of business writing within the overall framework of process or genre approaches, including correspondence, contracts, reports, CVs, agendas and minutes, and writing for the Internet.

Looking ahead

In the next chapter we consider how teaching can be done when the learner is in a different place, distant from the teacher.

How to teach business English at a distance

- **Distance learning**
- **Teaching by telephone**
- **E-learning possibilities**
- **Using the Internet for business English learning and teaching**
- **E-learning in practice**

Distance learning

Distance learning refers to a situation where the teacher and learner are physically separated. Various types of media can be used to help bridge the gap, including both traditional paper-based and electronic means. The medium itself is not the critical point; it is how the medium is utilized that matters. The principles of effective teaching and learning remain the same: the communicative needs of the learner are paramount, as is a clear idea of the target discourse they are aiming to master. At one extreme, distance learning can be almost 'industrial' in character, with training institutions churning out dozens of courses, and offering a well-established support infrastructure. At the other end of the scale, a much more personal operation can be found, with content and style decided by the teacher and the learner.

Distance learning can be **synchronous** (where the communication takes place in real time, with people interacting at once, as in telephone conversations or online chatting) or **asynchronous** (where communication takes place in stages, with one communication event following another, separated in time, such as by email). **Open learning** is one aspect of distance learning, and refers to the degree of autonomy the learner has in terms of what is covered on the course, how it is learned, and when it is learned. The more open a course is, the more independence the learner has; this is often easier to incorporate in a distance learning situation.

Advantages of distance learning

There are a number of reasons why distance learning is a most effective option for the business English teacher and learner. The key advantage is its flexibility; teachers and learners can choose the time, the pace, location, and content. So a busy executive whose job requires her to fly around the world for meetings would find it difficult to attend regular classes, but may find a distance learning approach more appropriate. In some companies, the teacher may be responsible for training a geographically dispersed group;

they may only meet once a month for face-to-face sessions. Or learners in pre-experienced groups may be separated because they are doing work placements in different companies.

Another advantage may be cost; distance learning courses can be cheaper than more traditional ones. Not only is the learner often learning in his or her own time, or in situations like airports or during travel (then no time is lost to the company), but there is no need to provide classrooms. If the course is to be delivered electronically, the cost of developing and producing materials is almost the same if there are ten students or one hundred students.

Finally, with distance learning there is the freedom to explore and to divert from a more **lockstep** approach (*lockstep* is where all the learners go through the same sequence of activities, usually at the same time, and is normal in class situations) because it is the learner's own goals which are paramount, not the group's. The individual distance learner may be able to choose which modules to ignore, and which modules to concentrate on, or which order to do the modules in.

Disadvantages of distance learning

Nevertheless, there are disadvantages too. Sometimes communication is difficult; some delivery systems (such as computers) need the learner to have a certain amount of technical competence, for example, and there are often teething problems. If the course is reliant upon paper-based materials, the traditional post can be slow and unreliable, or quite expensive. It is generally a lot harder to ask the teacher for a helping hand if she or he is in another country or time zone. Distance learning courses tend to take longer to set up too. It is not simply a matter of buying a ready-to-go coursebook; there are normally additional materials and delivery systems to organize. Course delivery or behavioural problems can also be more awkward to solve; it is not as simple as just walking into a classroom and dealing with it.

We have seen that one feature of distance learning is that the learner may be working alone (or, if they are part of a group, the other group members may be far away). Some learners find this isolation difficult to deal with, and this can result in frustration or decreased motivation. Similarly, some teachers may feel that they are not really in control of the learning process, or even aware of how a learner is progressing. And, of course, certain types of distance learning methodologies rule out activities like group work, or the chance to have normal face-to-face (F2F) communication.

Another limitation can be the tendency for distance materials to use activities which require an exact and specific answer, because of the need for the learners to be able to check their work themselves. With computer-based courses this can be frustrating (the simpler programs can show little initiative and little flexibility – it all depends on how sophisticated a level of response has been programmed into the software). Open-ended activities, such as letter writing, can sometimes only be really useful where the teacher is available to give feedback.

But perhaps the greatest disadvantage has to do with the nature of language learning. To become effective, learners must be exposed to

language, and they must be given the chance to use it. Exposure can be provided in distance learning up to a point, although it will often fail to take fully into account the interactive nature of communication. Distance learning therefore seems to lend itself best to certain types of language learning activities, such as reading, many writing and listening tasks, or focusing on vocabulary and grammar, much more easily than to speaking. However, and as we shall see, there are ways around some of these issues.

The role of the teacher and teaching materials

So what is the teacher's role in distance learning? At one extreme, the learner is using self-study material and is effectively autonomous, so the teacher has very little to do. At the other extreme, however, our role is to provide the guidance and support necessary for successful learning. One way to do this is to develop written **wrap-around materials**, which are normally short written texts designed to provide the support normally provided by the teacher's F2F instructions. These can be fairly simple, as the following example illustrates:

> This week's assignment involves writing a persuasive letter. Write an email to your boss, and ask him for a long weekend off next month (you need it because you have promised your son that you will take him to a concert).
>
> You'll see that I've given you a few extra phrases which you might find useful. There are more available on page 37 of your coursebook, and I suggest that you also have a look at the example letters on page 56 if you have time.

Wrap-around materials are normally written in a conversational style, and often include anecdotes. Their role can be to provide motivation, point out options available to the learner, give guidance as to what is important and what is less important, and offer study skills tips. They may even be written in the learner's own language.

Feedback is an area which needs particularly close attention in the context of distance learning; after all, one of the key reasons for the teacher being involved at all is to provide the kind of specific and targeted response that it is difficult for self-study materials to offer. Sometimes the teacher will be able to meet the learner occasionally, or perhaps speak on the telephone. But often feedback will simply consist of written comments on a particular piece of work, or suggestions about what the learner might like to do next. Such written feedback needs to be personalized in some way, so that the learner is aware that the teacher is 'speaking' directly to him or her about particular issues which need to be addressed. The contact also needs to be regular, so as to maintain a productive and trusting relationship; even if the learner has done little or no work, the right comment from the teacher at the right time can help sustain or rekindle motivation and interest.

Although the principles of **designing courses** and writing materials for use in distance learning are the same as in F2F teaching, additional questions may need to be considered, such as:

- Can the learners do this activity on their own?
- Are there enough examples given?
- Are the rubrics (instructions for an activity) clear?
- What response am I expecting?
- Are there other possible answers?
- Is there an answer key?
- Are the answers in the key explained in any way?
- Is there a glossary (e.g. explaining terminology)?
- How will I manage my relationship with a learner who I never meet?

An example will help to make clear how these questions might apply in practice. Imagine the teacher would like to use a commercially available course package with a particular group of learners, and the course is to have distance elements in it. The first point is to check whether or not the package comes with a workbook or a website; these are normally written for self-study work, and therefore ideal for distance learning. However, they can rarely be used on their own, because they normally consist of supplementary exercises, or practice activities designed to complement the student's coursebook. It is also important to make sure that learners have access to their own copies of any audio or video recordings, and that the transcripts of these recordings are in the student's book (some publishers only put these in the teacher's book). Finally, the student's book and workbook may both need to have the answers to all the activities in them, preferably with explanations.

The next stage in the materials selection process might be to look at the student's book from the learner's perspective, and without recourse to the teacher's book. Questions to consider could include: Can the activities be done without the teacher, or without pair or group work? How might activities be adapted, or how might the learners be briefed, so that best use can be made of the material available? Which activities will be left out, and how will they be replaced, if at all? What additional information or materials will the learners need? Will it be possible for learners to meet at some point, or at least communicate by phone, in order to do some of the activities together? Will the teacher need to speak to the learners before particular activities are done?

So distance learning has very clear strengths and weaknesses. Because of this it does not normally replace F2F learning, but supplements it. This is known as **blended learning**, where one mode of learning (F2F), blends in with another mode (distance activities). It is the mixture of the two that makes the total course so powerful. Properly managed, a blended learning solution may often be the most effective way for a business English learner to learn. The F2F element may be occasional meetings with the teacher when the need arises, or it may involve pre-planned workshops where the whole class gets together to consolidate what has been learned, and to do those things which it is not possible to do at a distance.

Teaching by telephone

Traditional distance learning materials are paper-based, but another common medium which requires little or no technical expertise is the telephone. Using the telephone puts teachers and learners in direct contact,

which is often the easiest way to solve a particular problem. This is particularly likely to be so in an in-company situation, where the teacher is often the first line of support for finding the right word, or clarifying a customer's needs. Teachers and learners may use the telephone to discuss assignments, plans, or learning themes which are causing problems. But using the telephone is also an excellent way to create the interaction which is so necessary for effective language learning. Here are six activities, to give an idea of what is possible (basic instructions are given for each activity, but adaptations are possible):

Taking messages on the telephone – warn your students that they will receive a phone call with a message for you, some time in the next few weeks. If necessary, go through recordings of suitable model calls. Get one of your native speaker colleagues to telephone your students and leave a message for you. Ideally, the conversation should be recorded. Give the learners a recording of the conversation (on audio tape or a digital medium). Ask them to transcribe it if they have time (transcribing is a very time-consuming business). Listen to the recording with the learners and discuss possible improvements, reformulating if necessary (this can be done with or without peers present). Repeat with a similar task one month later and compare the results.

Checking and clarifying information – call your learner and dictate a text; this may include difficult words and numerical information, depending on the needs of the learner. Record the conversation. Ask the learner to send you a copy of the text. Correct and return it with a copy of the recording. Listen to the recording with the learner and discuss possible reasons for any lack of accuracy. Focus on expressions for checking and clarifying information. Ask the learner to produce a checklist of useful expressions that could be used for checking and clarifying.

Working with specific authentic documents – give the learner a document taken from the learner's workplace. Warn them that you will call them with some questions in due course (questions may involve comprehension, or may reflect what possible customers or partners might ask). Call and ask questions about the document. Record the conversation. You (or the learner) transcribe the conversation and use the transcription as a basis for feedback.

Social interaction on the telephone – call your learner and:
- invite them to a party, *or*
- ask their opinion about something, *or*
- ask them for information, *or*
- tell them that the class times have changed or been cancelled.

You (or the learner) transcribe the conversation and use the transcription as a basis for feedback.

Telling stories and jokes – get the learner to listen to some recorded anecdotes or jokes (from the radio, the Internet, or recorded by you or a colleague). Ask them to call you with their own prepared anecdote or joke. Record them and use as a basis for feedback if necessary.

Role-playing customer phone calls – look at some types of letters (e.g. complaining letters) which may result in a phone call from a customer. Role-play such a phone call. You (or the learner) transcribe the conversation and use the transcription as a basis for feedback.

E-learning possibilities

E-learning refers to learning which takes place with the help of electronic media. The content is delivered electronically, rather than being paper-based or via a person. The **electronic media** can be **CD-ROM** (Compact Disc, Read Only Memory, which is a data storage device), the **Internet**, an **intranet** (a network of connected computers similar to the Internet, but used exclusively by a specific group of users, such as employees within a company), or **software** files of various types (electronic dictionaries, digital audio files, word-processed or spreadsheet documents, or whatever). These media are not exclusive to distance forms of learning, but this is where they are normally found. It is less usual for a group of business English learners to be sitting in a classroom working through CD-ROM activities on their laptops, than it is for them to be doing such an activity alone, away from the teacher.

E-learning offers some advantages over more traditional paper-based materials, even when they are supplemented by audio and video tape. Firstly, e-learning is now fairly common in many companies; it has a professional and modern feel to it which is attractive to some managers, it uses technology which is normally already in place, and it can be designed to provide managers with feedback on what the learners are doing. In some companies language learning is just one of several training services offered online.

Modern DVDs, CD-ROMs, and Internet connections offer increasingly high-quality video and sound as well as text; and some packages offer the facility for students to record their utterances and have the computer compare what they have said to a model. Access to the Web allows teachers and learners to do a variety of things; they can organize **webcasts** (broadcast audio or video, just like radio or TV, but delivered via the Internet), deliver materials, join **discussion boards** (which allow visitors to read or leave messages), participate in real-time text chat, or listen to and leave voicemail.

Learning platforms (sometimes called e-learning platforms, or learning management systems) are software programs which are available on the Web and which allow teachers to design their own Internet-delivered material. In other words, they are interfaces which teachers can use to manage their e-learning delivery. This may involve the design of courses, delivery of content, controlling access rights for different users, class email discussion groups, text chat, evaluation of learner participation, tests, and so on. The key advantage is that the teacher or school does not have to invest in the development of all the software, but simply buys a licence to use what they need. They can then develop a customized interface between themselves and the learners.

Sometimes the teacher will want to put their own teaching content online without the use of a commercial learning platform. There are two ways to do this. One is to translate documents into **html**, a format that can be read by a web browser such as Microsoft Explorer™ or Mozilla Firefox™ (remembering that it is not only online delivery that uses web browsers). The other way is to use authoring software, such as those packages provided by Clarity or Hot Potatoes, which allows the creation of activities like crosswords or 'drag and drop' exercises reasonably painlessly. One limitation is that normally such packages have a set number of exercise types, so on longer courses learners may get bored looking at the same type of thing.

Here is an example of a worksheet produced in this way (which could be delivered via an Internet, or intranet website, or on CD-ROM). The learner is required to click on the correct answers, and then listen to the dialogue to check. Such material needs to be written in a format which will download quickly, and which offers the use of different choices of technology (for example, here there is a choice between which software to use for the listening part.) Note that the materials may also need to give guidance as to how to obtain such software, as well as an easy-to-use menu system (on the left) which allows navigation to other worksheets. The designer has included a cartoon to make the worksheet visually more exciting.

e-learning for business [giving directions]

Start page

giving directions > **inside**

Choose an exercise!

Choose the correct alternatives, then click on "Check answer".

Talking about food
• food vocabulary

Click on a link below to listen to the conversation.
Real Audio Windows Media

Giving directions
• outside
• inside

A: Good morning. I've got a(n) (1) ????? ⌄ with Mr Fraser.

Talking about work
• work vocabulary

B: Okay. I'll (2) ????? ⌄ tell him you're here. Can I ask your name?

Common objects
• names of objects
• describing objects

A: It's Glass.

Presentations
• introductions

B: Mr Fraser, Mr Glass is here to (3) meet ⌄ you. *(pause)* Okay, you can go (4) ????? ⌄ up, Mr Glass. The lift is d????? up to the second (5) ?? direct n you come out of the lift straight go along the (6) ????? smoothly ?ser is in room number 209.

Telephoning
• arrangements

Social English
• invitations

Travel language
• in the bank

Check answer

Website designed by
David Smith

E-learning can have its disadvantages or difficulties, too. Some learners (and teachers) are technophobes, and are unwilling or unable to use the technology without extensive support. It can take a lot of effort before everyone in a group is getting the best out of an online learning forum, and there are also issues of control which the teacher will need to consider. How do you draw the 'quiet' learners into a discussion, for example, or how do you make sure that learners are doing the work themselves?

Computers are patient – they don't get bored or frustrated when people can't do something – but they also lack intuition, which means that the feedback they give is limited to what was programmed into them. This can be very frustrating if the computer keeps telling you your answer is wrong when you are sure it is actually right, especially if it does not explain what your supposed mistake is. Other drawbacks include the fact that many business people spend most of their working time at a computer, and at least some of them may feel that the last thing they want to do is to learn English via computer as well. And sometimes the right technology is not available; some companies and some schools do not have sound cards installed in every computer, for example, which means that users of those machines will not be able to access audio recordings.

Using the Internet for business English learning and teaching

The best aspect of e-learning for many is the Internet, which is an extraordinarily rich resource for both teacher and learner, both in terms of ease of delivery and in terms of breadth of content (see www.besig.org for a list of useful links for the business English teacher). Of course, exploiting the Internet is not limited to distance learning, but it is a resource that can easily be accessed without the teacher being present. There are several types of resources available.

General business information

Often the problem is not knowing where to start. Using a search engine (such as Google™, Yahoo™ etc) may take some time, particularly if the user is inexperienced. Some sites require payment, but some are free; all can easily be exploited by a teacher of business English. On page 103 is an example of the results of such a search; in this case the user had simply typed the word 'business' into the search engine business.com. Almost every business topic is available for further scrutiny and possible exploitation.

Another site, www.bized.ac.uk (run by the University of Bristol), includes interactive activities based on a wide variety of up-to-date business issues, a company facts section, and many other useful features. It is designed to be used by native speakers learning about business, but can easily be adapted to suit business English learners.

Specific company information

Business English learners are often more interested in specific company websites (their own, or those of competitors or partners). Large companies will have websites hundreds or even thousands of pages long, and it is almost always possible to find pages, even from their own company, which are unfamiliar to the learner. In-company teachers may also have full or

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Chemicals
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Computers & Software
Hardware, PCs, Printers, Software Aps...

Electronics & Semiconductors
Components, LCDs, Microelectronics...

Energy & Environment
Consulting Services, Oil & Gas, Trading...

Financial Services
Asset Mgmt, Insurance, Investment Banking...

Food & Beverage
Beverages, Restaurants, Vending...

Government & Trade
B2G Markets, Int'l Trade, US Federal Govt...

Healthcare
Diagnostic Equip, Medical Devices, Software...

Human Resources
Attendance, Career Mgmt, Hiring, Salary...

Industrial Goods & Services
Engineering, Machinery, Metals, Tool Leasing...

Internet & Online
ASPs, Ecommerce, ISPs, Site Mgmt, Hosting...

Law
Courts, Federal, Firms, Online Communities...

Management
Consulting, Change Mgmt, Supply Chain...

Media & Entertainment
Music, Publishing, Streaming Media, TV...

Pharmaceuticals & Biotechnology
Biotechnology, Clinical, Pharmacies...

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POPULAR CATEGORIES FROM OUR BUSINESS DIRECTORY:

partial access to the company intranet, which brings with it the possibility of using authentic materials galore, such as in-house journals, company policy documents, information about particular projects, copies of correspondence, and so on.

Here are some activities which teachers might suggest to learners who have access to their company intranet (the intranet may be used, and some of these activities may be done, with or without the teacher present):

- Read the **company history**, and report back to the class, summarizing it (in spoken or written form).

- Download a departmental **organization chart**. Discuss possible updates.

- Download **product information** from a separate branch or department of the company, and suggest possible marketing improvements.

- Compare **health and safety** or **employment regulations** from one department with those of an overseas department.

Download **speeches** made by members of the company's management or directors, and examine the issues raised.

Read **press releases**. Analyse what was and was not included, and why.

News

There are many sources of news on the Web. The large sites of major broadcasters like CNN or the BBC offer a huge variety of possibilities, ranging from audio (it is possible for learners with a good Internet connection to tune in to any radio station in the world), and video to written text. Traditional print media, such as newspapers, also offer similar potential. Learners may also be interested in specific topics such as stock prices, or the latest political scandal, or even the latest sports results. Here are some suggestions on how to exploit news sites. Again, these can be done with or without the teacher being present.

Download **articles on the same topic** from different websites, and compare different treatments of the same issue.

Read **news items**, and report back to the class (in spoken or written form).

Listen to reports from different parts of the world, and compare **accents**.

Access **archives**, and find out more about a particular area or topic. For example, learners may wish to understand more about a country or province because their company is considering doing business there.

Language learning resources

There are a number of different types of resources specifically designed for business English learners. Often these need to be paid for, but some allow a preview. The top of page 105 shows a screenshot from PEAK English (www.peakenglish.com), which offers a variety of courses catering for different levels and needs. The lessons follow a syllabus design which assumes that languages are best learned by focusing on discrete language items first. So, as we can see from the menu, the lesson is divided into six parts.

Other sites have different syllabus designs. The bottom of page 105 shows a screenshot from the BBC's website (www.bbc.co.uk is a very extensive site, with many sections of interest to English language learners). It shows an extract from an intermediate course designed to focus on typical language used on business trips. The website offers a number of features, including a glossary, which many learners find particularly useful, and a window which allows the learner to watch a short video clip and understand the context of the language being presented.

An advantage of using such websites is that they are kept up to date by their designers and so teachers don't have to do this themselves. Of course, the quality of the content offered may vary tremendously. The discussions on course design and materials selection in Chapters 3 and 4 are pertinent here.

Additional web-based language learning resources include electronic dictionaries, thesauruses, concordances (see page 49), pronunciation guides, as well as a variety of websites geared towards the general English learner. Here is an example from Thinkmap (www.visualthesaurus.com), a dictionary and thesaurus which uses a non-linear approach not possible in paper-based materials. In this example, the user has typed in the word *project*, and can now click on points to find out more about related words, including synonyms and definitions. The words move about on the screen as various options are clicked and relationships change, and the exploring can become quite addictive. This particular dictionary is not designed with language learners in mind, so a teacher may have to spend some time explaining how it works before expecting learners to be able to use it to its full advantage.
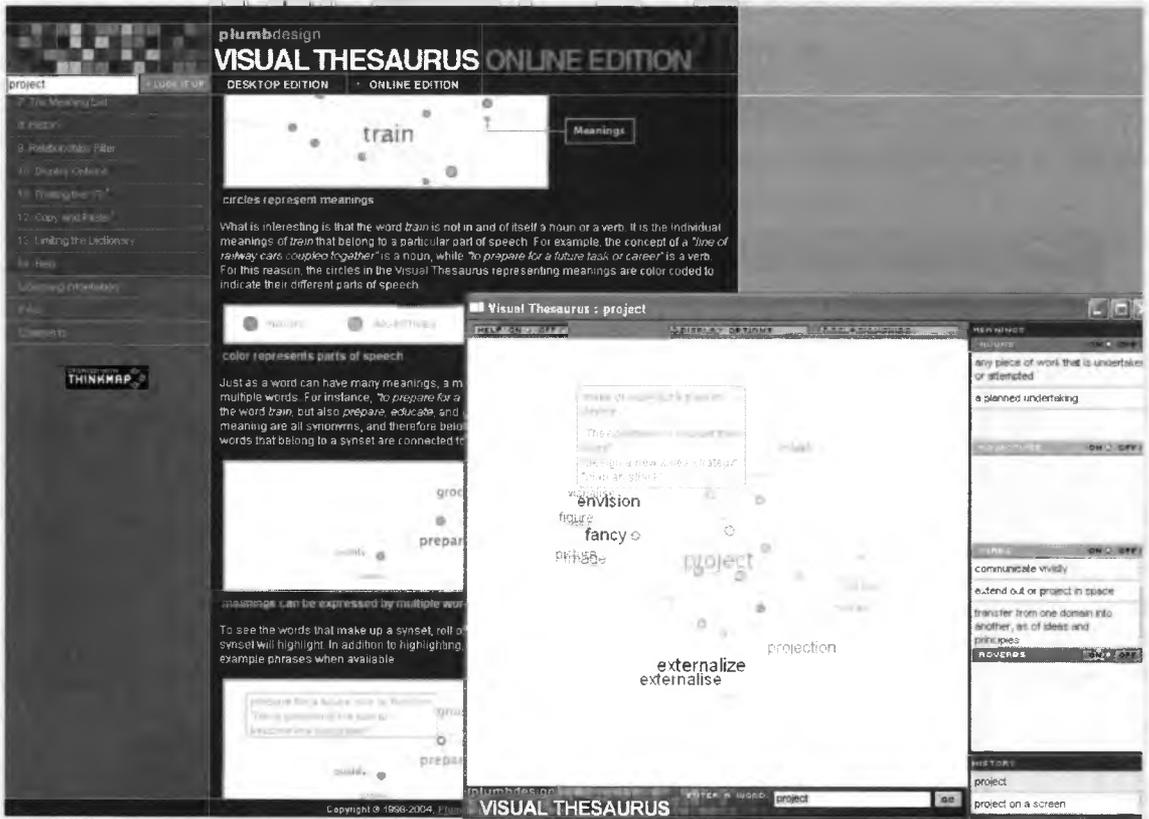
Publishers' resources

Many publishers offer additional online resources which can be used without the teacher present. For example, Longman Business English offers an article on one particular company each month, together with comprehension questions. A convenient feature is the availability of the *Longman Web Dictionary* (one of many online dictionaries offered by publishers), which allows the student to click on any word and read the definition of that word. In the screenshot (see bottom of page 107) the user

Business World

Company of the month: Nike

Read the article below on Nike. Don't forget, just double click on any word and the web dictionary will give you a definition.

There must be few people in the world who are not aware of the athletic footwear company, Nike. Since 1972, it has earned billions of dollars in the USA and around the world, selling footwear and later other items of clothing. Now the brand has been extended to watches and many other products.

Nike's success suggests that everybody loves Nike, but if you type the name into the search engine on your computer, you will find many sites protesting against Nike and calling for a boycott on Nike products. Most of these focus on the employment conditions in the factories where the footwear is made.

How does a company react to organised negative publicity? What would you do? What has Nike done?

Before you read on answer these questions:

1 What does Nike produce?
2 What do you associate with
3 Why do you some people not lov

The History of Nike

The origins of the company grew from
United States . American universities a
achievements on the sports field. Prom

employment – LONGMAN Web Dicti...

employment
S1, W1
noun

1 [uncountable] work that you do to earn money.
students seeking employment after college. | *Are you in full-time employment?* | in employment
(=doing a job)

2 [uncountable] the situation or condition in which

has clicked on the word *employment* and a pop-up window (see bottom right) has provided a definition.

Some publishers give online support to a coursebook that a teacher may be using with a particular group. This is an ideal way for teachers to vary the materials used with their learners; like all materials, they tend to appeal to some types of learners more than others. At the top of page 107 is an example of online supplementary material for some of the OUP range of business English titles (from www.oup.com).

Web quests

Another way business English teachers take advantage of the Web is to use **web quests**, which are activities designed to get learners looking for information and answering questions by using the resources on the Internet. This is much more than just delivering content; learners play an active role in finding and evaluating websites, and then use them to achieve a particular goal.

They can be done at different levels. At the simplest level (for low-level learners, or those who may be overwhelmed by the sheer amount of information on the Web), a web quest might ask a series of questions and point learners to a useful website where they can find the answers (sometimes this is called a 'treasure hunt'). This might be supplemented by exercises designed to pre-teach some of the vocabulary.

At the next level, the web quest will also give background information and reasons for doing the task, as well as a list of useful sites. Here are some examples of web quests, which can be adapted for different learners.

Business trip web quest – the teacher provides the learner(s) with the following introductory and task instructions, and list of website resources.

- **Introduction**
  You have received the following email from your new American boss:

Hi,

I've just found out that I have to go to London next week on a business trip. so I need you to make all the arrangements for me. I want to leave early next Tuesday morning and come back on Thursday evening. Can you do the following things for me:

– Book me a flight. I don't care which airline it's with, just try and find the cheapest flight available.

– Book me a hotel. My meetings are going to be in Kensington so try and find me a hotel there if you can. Don't pay more than 80 pounds a night.

– Find a nice restaurant for Tuesday night. I want to take my clients out for dinner. Something in or near Kensington would be ideal. Please tell me something about the restaurant you book.

– Book me 4 tickets for a show on Wednesday night. A West End musical would be perfect. Let me know what the show's about.

Let me know the arrangements once you've made them.

thanks
Frank

- **Task**
  Use the resources below (or other ones) to do the things your boss asked for (but don't really book the flight etc!). Then write your boss an email telling him what you have arranged.
- **Resources**
  Booking a flight
  http://www.buzzaway.com/
  http://onlinetravelers.com/html/scheduled.asp

  Finding a hotel
  http://www.hotelsoflondon.co.uk/
  http://www.oneclicktravel.com/london-hotels.html

  London restaurant guides
  http://www.london-eating.co.uk/
  http://www.london-restaurants.com/london/

  What's on in London
  http://www.timeout.com/london/
  http://www.a-london-guide.co.uk/

  Remember you can use Google™ (http://www.google.com) to find other websites.

  (Web quest written by David Smith)

Project trip web quest – at the next level, learners may be given less overt guidance. They may also need to analyse and use the information to do something specific with it, such as a presentation. The following activity illustrates how this might work in practice.

As you know, your company has just won an order to manufacture components for a new hydro-electric power station in Peru (100 km south of Lima). Because of your competence at speaking English, you and your fellow students have been chosen to form part of the project team. This task is designed to help you gain some of the background knowledge you will need.

Student 1:
Find out how hydro-electric power stations work, and prepare a ten-minute presentation for your colleagues.

Student 2:
Prepare a ten-minute briefing on the current political situation in Peru.

Student 3:
You will no doubt have some time off when you visit Peru. Prepare a 4-day sightseeing itinerary, and then persuade your colleagues that your plan is what they will want to do.

Finally, a web quest can easily be integrated into a case study or simulation. For example, the learners may be asked to do some research, and then follow

this up with a meeting where information is shared and evaluated, before a final decision is made. This decision can then be put in writing as part of a report for the chief executive. Other typical 'real life' activities might include requiring learners to integrate information into a spreadsheet, preparing PowerPoint™ presentations, producing written recommendations, and so on. Web quests are probably one of the most effective ways of replicating real-life work in a distance learning context.

E-learning in practice

Here are six instances of how e-learning methods and technologies have been used in practice. Although not all are examples of distance learning per se, they are included here to give an idea of the sort of things that are possible.

Modules and electronic records via an intranet learning platform

A manufacturing company in Europe wanted to improve the standard of English within the company. The learners were given placement tests and divided into groups. Each group was assigned a teacher who met them once a month. Learners were given access via their company intranet to a learning platform which offered them a number of modules at different levels, ranging from vocabulary and grammar exercises, to comprehension exercises involving both spoken and written texts. These modules were supplemented by purpose-written materials based on authentic documents provided by the company. The software provided the teacher with a record of what each learner had done, and how long it had taken. This allowed the teacher to recommend specific modules for different learners, according to their needs.

Online testing and self-directed access to resources

An Eastern European company had just been taken over by a US corporation. The new company language was to be English. The management needed to find out the standard of English within the company as fast as possible, and to start a training programme which would bring everyone up to speed. The company decided to carry out an online computer-based testing programme because it was deemed faster and cheaper than face-to-face oral testing. Based on the results, employees were assigned to various groups for learning. F2F learning was supplemented by the creation of a self-access resource centre containing PCs with Internet access, a collection of CD-ROMs, and a library of DVD films.

Web-based research projects in small groups

A university course included the need for learners to obtain credits in business English. Unfortunately, learners came from a large number of different specializations (law, economics, business studies, engineering etc), and classes were large (40+). The teacher decided to divide the group into small groups (3 or 4 students in each) according to language level; each group was assigned a term project. The project involved the group working independently to carry out web-based research on topics from different specialized fields, culminating in one coherent F2F presentation from each group.

Using electronic tools to analyse real language

An in-company trainer decided that report-writing skills within her company needed improvement. She obtained copies of relevant reports which had been written in the last five years, and scanned them into lexical analysis software (*Oxford Wordsmith Tools* is one example). She then used the corpus she had created to produce examples of real language which the learners could analyse for patterns (for example, typical collocations, noun + verb patterns) and compare to their own work.

Web conferencing

A trainer at a manufacturing plant found that, because of widely dispersed office locations, attendance was low; learners often took 20 minutes to get to class. The solution was to invest in web conferencing software (an example of such software is *CUseeMe*) which allowed the whole class to meet and interact online. (Note that web conferencing allows people to interact via their own PCs, whereas videoconferencing normally entails going to a purpose-built room complete with cameras and other special equipment.)

The class website

The teacher asked one of the learners in the group to create a class website. This developed into a project which everyone in the class contributed to, with photos, lists of likes and dislikes, useful links, and examples of written work. The teacher added additional worksheets and revision material. The website created much discussion both inside and outside the classroom, and was described as particularly motivating by the learners in their end-of-course feedback sheets.

Conclusions

In this chapter we have:
- noted that there are various advantages and disadvantages to distance learning, depending on the teaching context, and that materials may need to be designed to give the support normally provided by the teacher.
- examined the use of the telephone in a distance learning context, and looked at a number of sample activities.
- established that e-learning is potentially the most effective way of distance learning within a business English teaching context, and looked at practical ways to do this, including different methods of delivering materials such as CD-ROMs, learning platforms, and authoring software.
- looked at a number of ways of utilizing the Internet, particularly by exploiting websites and creating web quests.
- reviewed six instances of situations where e-learning was used.

Looking ahead

We saw in Chapter 1 that every time a business English learner uses English he or she does so in an intercultural context. The next chapter focuses on this key area of communicative competence, and offers a number of suggestions for dealing with it in a business English classroom.

How to include intercultural training

8

- **What is intercultural training?**
- **Using cultural dimensions**
- **Understanding our own culture**
- **Increasing awareness**
- **Using critical incidents**

What is intercultural training? Intercultural training is about helping people to interact successfully with people from other cultures. It includes teaching appropriate language use for different contexts, and also develops learners' understanding of the role that culture plays in communication. Such training should help people to avoid the kind of situation that Rudyard Kipling so compellingly describes:

> The Stranger within my gate
> He may be true or kind,
> But he does not talk my talk –
> I cannot feel his mind.
> I see the face and the eyes and the mouth
> But not the soul behind.
>
> From *The Stranger* by Rudyard Kipling

There are different opinions on how the avoidance of intercultural misunderstanding is best addressed in the business English classroom. Some argue that business English teachers are primarily language specialists, and should leave such issues to people who have formally studied intercultural communication. So in some teaching situations experts are brought in to complement what the language teacher is doing. Others argue that the two cannot be separated, and that business English teaching and intercultural training are two sides of the same coin. After all, every time one of our learners uses English it is likely to be with someone from a different culture, be it a different national culture or a culturally different organization. According to this view, it is up to the language teacher to deliver such training.

There are two ways of thinking about what intercultural training is and what it can achieve. The first, which we could call the **dealing with diversity** or **culture-general** approach, encourages learners to understand what culture is, gain awareness of how their own culture works, and appreciate that the way they do things is not necessarily the only way. The idea is to break down prejudices, look at the pros and cons of stereotyping, and to recognize that other people have points of view that are as valid as our own. It is not about learning to deal with specific countries, but about

how to deal with people who may have different ways of doing things. The aim is to provide learners with strategies that they can use to cope with diversity, and ultimately to create value out of that diversity.

The second approach focuses on preparing people to work with **specific cultures** or in **specific contexts**; this is often called **culture-specific** training. Sometimes learners will only need to deal with one or two cultures. This is typical for expatriates who are posted abroad for a period of time, and need to have some understanding about how a specific culture works, and what behaviour is or is not acceptable. The danger of this approach is that it can be somewhat superficial, with learners being lulled into a false sense of security. Nevertheless, provided that learners appreciate the limitations of simple (often simplistic) 'dos and don'ts' lists, such training can serve as a useful first step. This is especially so if the teacher comes from the country in question, or has first-hand experience of that culture. Such culture-specific training often includes elements of culture-general training discussed above. Providing training before departure, with follow-up training, say two months into a foreign assignment, may be particularly beneficial. **Repatriation** training may also be necessary at the end of an assignment in order to ease the move back into one's own culture.

Where does this leave the business English teacher? As ever, it depends on the needs of the learners. The rest of this chapter focuses on different perspectives and activities which the business English teacher might find useful with particular groups.

Using cultural dimensions

There are many ways for our learners to understand the nature of culture, general or specific. Researchers and cultural commentators have identified different **dimensions** as a method of analysing and describing what is happening. Dimensions are perspectives which allow us to measure and compare certain attributes of different cultures, although it must always be remembered that other cultures may see these attributes quite differently. Named dimensions are very useful for the business English teacher because they help to generate useful discussion and debate about relevant issues. The particular discussion formats and activities that teachers may choose to employ will depend on the group of learners and what they are trying to achieve. When planning intercultural training, it is helpful to have an awareness of the main dimensions of cultural comparison that are commonly used in the literature on intercultural training. Different researchers have arrived at a range of dimensions, which can at times overlap; here is a brief summary (see the chapter notes for more detailed references):

- **High context versus low context** – in a high-context culture, members use the context itself as a means of communication. This means that they do not need to explain things explicitly which are readily available from the situation, or from the environment. Often they use non-verbal behaviour, value long-term relationships, and work with spoken rather than written agreements. In low-context cultures, things need to be communicated much more explicitly – people often appear direct and

dislike ambiguity. Outsiders may find it relatively easy to become a member of the group. The business manager from a low-context culture will value long, detailed contracts, which are, of course, adhered to once signed. After all, that is the point of a written agreement. For the high-context business manager, the contract may be seen as more of a guideline, to be used for further discussion if need be. After all, flexibility is paramount. Or imagine a situation where a visitor has arrived after a long journey. The high-context host might suggest that the visitor takes time to rest and recuperate, whereas the low-context host might expect an explicit statement of tiredness before making the same offer.

- **Time** – in **monochronic** cultures, time is seen as linear, with one event following another. Members of **polychronic** cultures, on the other hand, are able to manage different activities at once. This might influence the way a meeting is run, for example. The person from the polychronic culture might spend the meeting doing various things like making phone calls, talking to different people, and so on. The monochronic person would feel more comfortable dealing with the matters at hand, in sequence, one after the other.

- **Power distance** – this refers to the distance or equality between individuals in a hierarchy (if, indeed, there is one). In a low-power distance culture people find it easy to approach their leaders, to discuss issues, and even to criticize them. Managers are likely to consult subordinates. In a high-power distance culture the opposite happens. Subordinates are likely to do what they are told, and there is little discussion.

- **Uncertainty avoidance** – this dimension reflects how different cultures approach ambiguity and uncertainty. If there is low tolerance of uncertainty, for example, people value job security and clear rules and regulations.

- **Individualism versus collectivism** – some cultures see individualism and competition as important attributes. In certain societies, for example, the individual's willingness to have different opinions, to react against authority, to stand up for his or her rights, is prized. In a more collectivist society, conformity and loyalty are rated more highly.

- **Masculinity versus femininity** – in masculine cultures, achievement is often measured in terms of power and wealth, and emphasis placed on work goals and assertiveness. Feminine cultures see personal goals, human contact, and relationship building as more valuable.

- **Long-term orientation** – this dimension highlights differences between cultures that see short-term benefits as important (consider, for example, the way some company strategies focus on short-term profits), and those

that feel that time spent developing longer-lasting relationships brings greater benefit.

- **Universalism versus particularism** – the universalist says that rules and regulations are there to be followed. The particularist would argue that it depends on the situation and people involved. The following example is somewhat simplistic, but might help to clarify the concept. If a cashier is caught stealing from the till, in a universalist culture he or she would probably lose their job. In a particularist culture the fact that the person was stealing to pay for a child's education might be seen as an excuse for the behaviour.

- **Neutral versus emotional** – this dimension looks at how people show emotions in various situations. So a more neutral culture would pride itself on staying calm and in control in the face of chaos and confusion, whereas a more emotional culture might give vent to feelings which are, after all, part of human nature.

- **Specific versus diffuse** – in specific-oriented cultures, the relationship between the manager and the subordinate depends on the situation where the relationship is taking place. The 'at-work' relationship is different from the 'at-play' one. In diffuse cultures, the relationship is always there, and business can be done at any time or place.

- **Status** – different cultures accord status in different ways. We can say, simplistically, that in Japan, for example, age is treated with respect whereas in the US achievement is regarded as more important.

- **Relationship with nature** – some cultures believe that the environment can be controlled, whereas others see themselves as part of the environment. This might influence the way people accept technology, for example, or how they work with plans (can business plans really influence what happens in the market place, or are they simply a reflection of what is already happening?).

Researchers have looked at other dimensions too. The way different cultures use **non-verbal communication** is particularly interesting. Here we can look at body language (**kinesics**), eye movement and contact (**occulistics**), touch (**haptics**), and body distance (**proxemics**).

If we look at speaking, **paralanguage** (the way we vary tone, pitch, volume, and speed of talking) can also be quite different between cultures. So can turn taking. The diagrams on page 116 illustrate typical differences. Note, for example, how Anglo-Saxon speakers tend to wait until the other person has finished speaking before contributing to the conversation. In a spoken interaction in Latin cultures, on the other hand, utterances tend to overlap, while in some East Asian cultures, conversationalists may feel more comfortable with a short pause between utterances.

Styles of verbal communication | Tone of voice

From *Riding the Waves of Culture* by Trompenaars
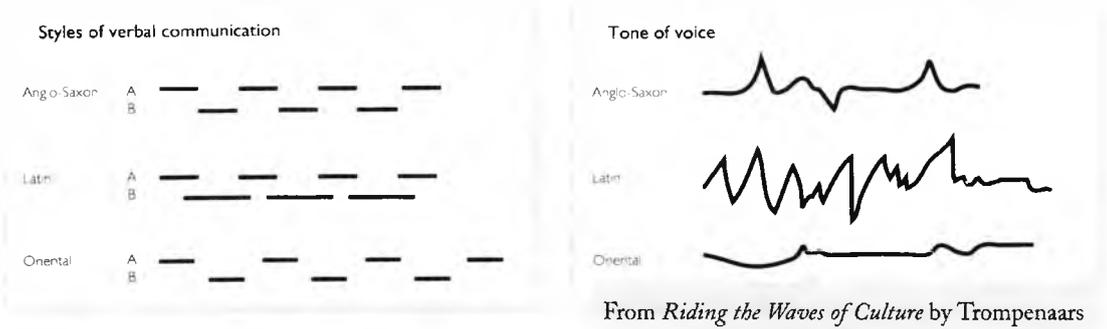
So how can teachers explore these dimensions with their students in the classroom? Here are some ideas on how to prompt discussion about various aspects of different cultures:

- Learners study a series of **advertisements** from their own and other countries (taken from the TV, radio, magazines, the Internet etc).

- Learners compare **CVs** (or tips on writing CVs) from different countries.

- Learners look at the way different **news** agencies (ideally from different countries) report the same item of news.

With more experienced groups, teachers can try the following:

- Select four or five of the **dimensions** mentioned above, and write them down as pairs of terms representing a **continuum** (e.g. high context to low context). Learners decide where their own and another culture go on the continuum, and can discuss reasons why they think this.

- Bring in examples of **email correspondence** from different countries or companies. Discuss the differences in approach.

- Elicit **anecdotes** about meetings with people from other cultures. Discuss how 'they' do things.

- Examine how different cultures use **metaphors** in different ways (a good way of combining linguistic input with intercultural training). For example, a discussion of English expressions involving time can be used to focus on how different cultures view time. What does it mean to *waste* time? How can a person *run out of* time? How is it possible to *save* time? (We can note here that in some English-speaking cultures, time is seen as a valuable resource or commodity, like money.) Or teachers can focus on sports metaphors. Is it possible to have *a level playing field*? How can we *take the ball and run with it*? The English language provides a rich source of metaphorical language which is wonderful to exploit in an intercultural training context.

Understanding our own culture   We often judge other cultures by the way they differ from our own way of doing things. **Ethnocentricity** refers to the judging of another culture using one's own standards and beliefs; good interculturalists, of course, try not to

do this. This is related to **cultural relativism,** which refers to the idea that we see everything in terms of our own culture, and that therefore complete neutrality is not possible. If intercultural training is about equipping people to cope with differences in a business context, then one way to do this is by raising awareness of these differences; this might help learners to become less ethnocentric. To do this, we have first to understand how we do business ourselves. This can be difficult; is it even possible to analyse objectively our culture from our own, internal perspective? After all, will this not inevitably colour the way we perceive and analyse?

An example of this is to compare the ways in which different cultures handle projects. An Anglo-Saxon perspective may be to view projects as a plan for the future, with clear aims, milestones, and deadlines (note the tacit implications of these three metaphors). Yet this perception is coloured by the fact that Anglo-Saxons (in general) tend to see time as a linear concept, with one event following another. A culture which views time differently may deal with projects in other ways – individual objectives, for example, may be flexible, depending on factors seen as outside the control of the project managers. Yet the project might still succeed because that culture has a more holistic view and takes better account of stakeholders, or comes up with more appropriate responses to contingencies.

Similar arguments could be made for almost all communicative situations in the business world. What goes down well as a presentation in one culture might be profoundly irritating in another. The use of humour during important meetings might be interpreted as a lack of seriousness in some cultures, but vital for rapport building in another. How do people interrupt during meetings (if they do at all)? What are acceptable topics of conversation on social occasions? Is it appropriate to see a job interview as a situation where both sides are equal partners, or has one side higher status? The list goes on.

How can we help our learners to understand their own culture? Here are some ways:

With a group containing people from **different national cultures** – ask students to list stereotypes about their own country. A possible questionnaire could look something like this:

> How do people from other cultures see your culture? Write down three positive and three negative characteristics.
>
>   Positive: Negative:
>
> Now look at the other national cultures represented in the room. Can you list stereotypes for these cultures?
>
> Country: Positive: Negative:

What should be clear from the follow-up discussion (which may need sensitive facilitation) is that we see ourselves differently from how others see us. Secondly, different cultures may use different stereotypes

to describe other groups: cultures A and B may see culture C in very different ways.

With a group containing people from **different organizations** – ask people to list the normal way of doing certain things in their organization, such as:
* who has authority to sign certain contracts?
* what quality procedures are used?
* what constitutes acceptable business dress?
* how long do people stay at work?

If the group members come from different industries, so much the better. The result will be a discussion about how and why certain things are done in the way they are done.

Variation – ask learners to list tips on how to do business in a foreign country they know or may have visited. Then ask them to produce a similar list for their own country, the aim being to produce a guide for foreign visitors. They should soon see that, although a national boundary has some influence on how people behave, it is not the only influence. Other factors such as individual characters, regions, religions, and traditions are also important. This can be followed up by examining such a guide (typical guides are normally available in airport bookshops, and on the Internet).

With a group from one company – ask the group to prepare a guide for workers new to the company. They may need some prompts:

What is it like to work in this company? Give information about workers' rights, holidays, pay, union representation, working conditions, how criticism and complaints are treated, hierarchy, recruitment, and dismissal etc.

Follow-up – compare this guide to that of other companies. The Internet is a particularly useful tool for these sorts of activities, because it is often possible to find out quite a lot about a corporate culture via a company's website. If learners have access to a company intranet, so much the better. Some groups may also like to think about how an 'official' guide issued by senior management might differ from an 'informal' guide produced by junior staff or shop-floor workers (this may reveal sub-cultures, differences in perception, and contradictions between theory and practice).

Increasing awareness

So far we have considered culture as a concept, dimensions of culture, and various activities that can be used to make learners think more deeply about their own culture. Such activities are largely **cognitive**, in that they encourage learners to increase their knowledge of culture as a subject.

But there are other ways to make learners more aware of culture, and these are more **affective** or **experiential** in the way they work. Typical of these methods are role-plays and simulations where emotions and

interpersonal skills are brought into play. Of course, teachers should be aware that such activities may not be appropriate with some groups, especially where cultural (or even personal) sensitivities are concerned. Nevertheless, they can be extremely useful. Here are some examples:

Turn-taking (pair work) – tell each pair of learners that they are to have a conversation with each other in English. The activity will last about five minutes. Each learner gets one of the following cards:

Person A

Have a conversation with your partner. It can be about anything which is relevant to your workplace, such as recent events, plans for reorganization, or new products. It is your job to make sure that the conversation goes on for at least five minutes.

Person B

Have a conversation with your partner. It can be about anything which is relevant to your workplace, such as recent events, plans for reorganization, or new products. However, you must always leave at least a **five second pause** before you speak. This shows respect for your partner.

This activity is designed to make learners more aware of how turn-taking in conversations takes place. What normally happens is that Person A finds the 'silences' uncomfortable, and may want to fill them with more conversation (which may make it difficult for Person B to get a chance to speak). During the debrief afterwards the teacher should lead the discussion around to why there was a feeling of discomfort during the activity (if the learners come from a culture where such silences are normal, then it is an easy matter to change Person B's card to say, 'You must always speak immediately after your partner has finished – do not leave any pauses in the conversation.').

Culture shock (4–6 learners) – ask two people to leave the room, and give each of them one of the following role-cards to read (note that you can change the 'rules' to suit the group – for example, they should answer only people wearing glasses, or brown shoes, or ties, or whatever).

Person A

You are going to meet some foreign business people for the first time. However, you have to follow some cultural rules. If someone asks you a question with a smile, you may answer. Do not answer if there is no smile, because it means the questioner is very rude. Always agree with anything someone of the **opposite** sex says; it keeps them happy. You should not ask any questions yourself.

Person B
You are going to meet some foreign business people for the first time. However, you have to follow some cultural rules. If someone asks you a question with a smile, you may answer. Do not answer if there is no smile, because it means the questioner is very rude. Always agree with anything someone of the **same** sex says; it keeps them happy. You should not ask any questions yourself.

The rest of the group get this one:

You are going to meet some foreign business people for the first time. You have no idea where they come from or what they do, although you have been told that they speak some English. Your boss wants you to try and find out as much as possible.

What happens is that the group goes through some culture shock, as they realize that the others are operating to different rules, and that they do not know what those rules are. The value of the activity is enriched by getting both sides to discuss how they felt and what they thought was happening.

Cultural rules (6+ learners) – brief the learners that they are going to take part in a simulation to practise small talk. The setting should be something relevant to your group, such as a trade fair reception, a product launch, or a conference opening ceremony. Each learner gets a role card which asks him or her to behave in a certain way, as follows (you may wish to change some of these, depending on the group):

- You come from a culture where it is rude to look someone in the eye.
- You come from a culture where it is normal to keep at least an arm's length between people.
- You come from a culture where you answer 'Yes' if you think the person wants you to agree with them. Saying 'No' is very impolite.
- You come from a culture where it is normal for you to hold someone's hand when you talk to them.
- You come from a culture where it is normal to move around when you speak to other people.
- You come from a culture where it is normal to keep a distance of about 25 cm between people when you talk to them.
- You come from a culture where it is normal to examine people's ears while you talk to them.
- You come from a culture where it is normal to speak very quietly.
- You come from a culture where it is normal to speak very loudly.
- You come from a culture where it is normal to place your hand on people's shoulders when you talk to them.

If the group is large enough you could ask learners to find someone from their own culture. This activity is great fun, especially when the culture that likes to keep a distance meets the culture that wants to stay close. What happens is that they follow each other around the room! During the ensuing discussion learners inevitably try to recognize actual national cultures. The feedback should point out that no specific real cultures were deliberately depicted, and that the fact that they made such assumptions shows how our own perceptions and prejudices influence what we do and how we think. Of course, part of the feedback could also be related to their language use, depending on the needs of the group.

Rules of the game – another (similar) activity is to split a large group into small groups around tables, and give each group a set of rules for a game you have devised (it could be based on cards, or a chess set, or Ludo™, or whatever you have available). The learners study the rules, after which no more talking is allowed. After a few minutes of playing time, ask people from different tables to swap, to join another group and carry on playing. They will assume that the people are playing to the same set of rules – but each group has its own, slightly different set. Playing the game to unknown rules leads to another intercultural experience.

Finally, another way to increase awareness is to use culture as a backdrop for all the other aspects of communication skills training. Thus if the topic is negotiations, one of the aspects of negotiations is to discuss how different cultures might approach them. A key part of presentations training is to make sure that the presenter is doing something appropriate for his or her audience – clearly there is an intercultural aspect here. Even the way people answer the phone is influenced to a greater or lesser degree by intercultural factors. Feedback on any business English activity can and should include intercultural aspects if it is appropriate.

Using critical incidents

Building awareness of cultural differences is not enough. Learners need to be able to cope with the differences, and to do this they need practice. One way to do this is to move to the target culture and live within it. However, this is not always practical. Intercultural trainers therefore use **case studies** or **critical incidents** in order to present learners with a problem that needs to be solved. Because they are not personally involved in the situation, they can usually discuss the issues objectively, and decide upon a course of action. Critical incidents focus on differences from a practical rather than theoretical perspective. Of course, sometimes learners do not find a solution, or find that there is no perfect solution, but this is a reflection of the real world rather than a failure of the method. Here are some examples, which may be used in pair or group discussion work, for example:

Critical Incident 1

Joe Williams is an engineer who is sent by his company to work in a subsidiary abroad. There he finds that meetings are very different from what he is used to. Meetings in his new country seem to be used as a way for the department head to issue instructions and to explain what is to happen, rather than as a place to brainstorm and gather ideas as a team, which is what he is used to. Then Joe is promoted to head of department. How should he run meetings in future?

Critical Incident 2

Julia Chee has recently moved from South East Asia to a company in Southern Europe. She finds that unlike in her previous company, here her male colleagues often touch her arm or hands during conversation. One has even put his arms around her. She knows that this is normal in Southern Europe, but nevertheless feels uncomfortable with the situation. What should she do?

Critical Incident 3

Harold Swanson has to take some product samples to another country. He has done the trip many times, but this time he is stopped at the border by a customs officer, who insists that he pays $200 for permission to enter the country. In Harold's country, such a demand would be considered corrupt, but here it is quite normal for government employees to supplement their income in this way; indeed Harold is used to paying around $50 for the privilege. However, this time Harold feels that $200 is too much. What should he do?

Conclusions

In this chapter we have:
- seen that intercultural training can be an integral part of the business English teacher's job because business English learners will use the language to communicate in an intercultural setting.
- noted that culture can be analysed using a number of different dimensions.
- seen that we can improve our learners' intercultural competence by using various activities to facilitate understanding of their own culture, increase their awareness of cultural differences, and analyse critical incidents.

Looking ahead

In the final chapter we look at how business English training can be evaluated.

Evaluating and assessing

- **Evaluation**
- **Testing learners**
- **Evaluating using feedback and observation**
- **The reflective practitioner**
- **The customer's perspective**

Evaluation

Evaluation is of critical importance in supporting and shaping how teaching is done. It involves asking questions, collecting relevant information, and making judgements, and all within a context of specific purposes and goals. A needs analysis, discussed earlier, is a form of evaluation. Placement tests involve evaluation, as does making decisions about materials. A sponsoring company may wish to evaluate a course that is on the market, or learners' language skills may be assessed to see if they are ready for an exam. There are other types of questions that teachers may need answers to. For example, they may want to check if the teaching objectives have been met, or if the teaching methods that they used need improving. Answering such questions can take up a lot of time and effort, so the first question to ask is whether it is worth doing. Other questions to ask about evaluation include: *Who will do it? When will it be done? What will be evaluated?* and *How will it be done?* How these questions are answered will depend on the situation. Evaluating a one-off, in-company course will differ from evaluating a university course that runs ten times a year.

One model of evaluation commonly found in business English training (particularly in-company) is based on Kirkpatrick's work in the 1960s. This model is built on five levels of evaluation, all interrelated.

- Level 1 involves the learners' **reaction** to the teaching – were they satisfied? The focus here is on the course itself and its delivery: the teacher, the materials, and so on.
- Level 2 relates to the **learning** – what was actually learned? Typically this involves a pre-test and a post-test. Here the focus is on the learner.
- Level 3 has to do with the **transfer** of what has been learned to the workplace – is the learning work-relevant? Are the learners using their new skills? The focus is on the learner and the workplace.
- Level 4 is concerned with **results** – has the teaching resulted in any business impact? Are the participants more successful in their negotiations, for example? Have their telephone skills improved?
- Level 5 looks at the **return on investment** (ROI) – what (and how much) tangible (e.g. monetary) and intangible (e.g. employee motivation) benefit has the training led to, relative to its cost?

Another way to look at evaluation is to use categories, as follows:

- **Summative** evaluation is carried out at a pre-specified stage in a course (such as the end), and looks at whether or not the course objectives have been achieved, or how effective, or efficient the course was at achieving those objectives. A typical method is the use of tests.
- **Formative** evaluation looks at what was good and not so good on a particular course, and forms a basis for change and future action. In other words, the aim is to make improvements. For example, an end-of-course questionnaire might ask participants to comment on the quality of the hotel used to run the course – adverse comments may result in the next course being run in a different hotel.
- **Illuminative** evaluation is designed to help us understand the teaching and learning processes within the course – typically this will look at issues like classroom interaction, or learning strategies used by the participants.

To provide answers to these questions, we not only have to collect and measure data in some systematic way, but we also have to analyse and interpret the results so that a judgment can be made. This judgment may then lead to **innovation** or other change of some kind.

Data can be **quantitative**, if they can be expressed by a numerical value (e.g. the results from many tests, checklists, or surveys), or **qualitative**, referring to the quality, type, or depth of whatever is being evaluated (such data are often richer, but more subjective in nature). Examples of qualitative data include the notes made during interviews, classroom observation, and case studies (such as verbal descriptions of how a particular learner has progressed through a course). Both types of data are common within a business English teaching context.

The process of measuring, using such data, is known as **assessment**. It is important not to use only one measure, since this may give unreliable results; it is better to use two or more different assessment tools. Using different perspectives to assess the same thing in this way is called **triangulation** in a research context, and **360 degree assessment** in the business world. For example, if we wanted to know how effective a course on telephone skills has been, we might test the participants using a series of role-plays, interview them to see how they feel about their telephone skills, and record some 'real life' conversations to see how they cope.

Testing learners

Testing is probably the most common way of checking whether participants on a course have reached a certain standard, and it provides a snapshot of where people are, with respect to their learning or skill development, at a specific time and place. Testing and assessment can be formal procedures, aimed at measuring and judging skills or knowledge, but the term *assessment* is also used to refer to a process which happens informally, continuously, and repeatedly: the teacher assesses learners in every lesson. Testing typically gives results that are expressed quantitatively, whereas assessment is as likely to be expressed in qualitative terms.

Placement and diagnostic tests have already been described in Chapter 2, but there are also other types of test. **Progress** or **end-of-course** tests (also

called **achievement** tests) are designed to ascertain whether objectives have been met, and are linked to specific courses. **Continuous assessment** refers to regular checks and tests which build up to give a cumulative picture. Incidentally, tests should not be seen as separate from the learning process; since all tests recycle language, they are an integral part of learning.

Testing business speaking skills

When we test business speaking skills, we are normally interested in certain criteria, such as:

- **Fluency** – e.g. do the speaker's hesitations and repetitions sound natural?
- **Complexity** – e.g. is the language lexically rich enough, or is it too simplistic?
- **Accuracy** – e.g. does the speaker make grammatical mistakes?
- **Intelligibility** – (can the speaker be understood?) e.g. are words and utterances correctly stressed and pronounced?

Here is a transcript of what one learner says in a negotiation role-play. The other participants in the role-play have introduced themselves, and now the 'seller' is giving some information about his product.

> We are here to erm talk about new lamps for your factory and erm I wanted to know what your requirements requirements in your company. We have erm two solutions erm for you. We have standard model of lamps and we have a new model erm developed erm er for a half year ago. This new model is a little bit more expensive but it's more energy efficient and erm erm the lamps the life of the lamps is longer you have a great guarantee package. You have no er you have four year guarantee in the new model er two years guarantee in the standard model and erm yes the price model is that you have to pay for the standard solution 200 Euro and for the new model 300 Euro. Pound! (*laughs*) And erm we are certified er DIN ISO 9000 our our the whole company and erm our lamps are er you find our lamps world wide in America in South ...

It will be clear from this example that it is hard to judge speaking ability without actually listening to the speaker; transcripts only give part of the picture. It is because of this that a test of a person's communicative competence should ideally be more than a reading and writing test (nor should it rely on transcripts of speech), although some testing organizations argue that there is some positive correlation between spoken communicative ability and ability in reading and writing.

In addition, as already discussed, business English competence is not only about language. Often mastery of the language is intertwined with other skills. In the above negotiation, for example, evaluation might also take account of the outcome of the negotiation – did the seller close the deal satisfactorily? In real commercial life, nothing else matters.

We have said that another common business English speaking skill is giving presentations (see page 69), and we have already seen that a good presenter needs to be able to do other things besides simply produce

language. The following simple checklist can be used by anyone in the group to evaluate a presentation, and gives an idea of the wide range of criteria which need to be considered (note that the measurement scale is based on pluses and minuses, rather than numbers).

Name: Lip Seng						**Topic:** New product developments	**Date:** 9/10
	++	+	0	–	—	**Comments**	
Aids – use of laptop, OHP, flipchart, quality of slides, handouts	✓					Nice simple slides	
Delivery – intonation, pitch, tone, volume			✓			Not loud enough. Sometimes monotonous	
Body language – dress, mannerisms, gestures		✓				Looked relaxed	
Language – accuracy, fluency, appropriacy, simplicity		✓				Pronunciation problems with – acquisition, advertising	
Structure – clear aim/message, relevant content, logical sequence, timing		✓				Content sometimes too simple (e.g. slide 7). Good summary.	
Rapport – eye contact, interaction with audience, humour, style	✓					Good eye contact. Handled questions well.	

Such evaluation sheets are typical of **task-based assessments** (see page 21) which, as we have seen, are designed to reflect real-life situations. The focus is on the performance of the task, as much as on the language. Performance of the task should be assessed using criteria which are worked out beforehand. It is critical in the choice of criteria that the task designer understands how the language is to be used in the target situation from the perspective of the test taker and the people he or she is to deal with. The following true story shows what can happen when the criteria are not agreed in advance.

A manager was sent on a residential course in order to prepare for a series of important meetings with customers. He took his laptop, together with his prepared PowerPoint™ presentations, and intended to use the opportunity to practice his 'real' presentations in a safe environment. Unfortunately, these presentations were technical and complex, and the teacher did not fully understand what was being presented. He criticized the manager for using too much jargon. The teacher had ignored the fact that what was important to the learner was not whether the teacher could understand the presentations, but whether or not the customer would be able to. And jargon was not the issue!

Despite the obvious advantages, there are potential pitfalls with using tasks as a basis for language assessment. First of all, it can sometimes be hard to create a fair test environment which, at the same time, accurately reflects a real-life situation. The success of a realistic negotiation task, for example, can be influenced by several factors outside the tester's control. How skilful is the other party in the negotiation? How open is the task to relatively uncontrollable issues such as problems with price, availability of components, and suppliers? Such non-linguistic issues may have a direct bearing on the difficulty of the task. Secondly, business tasks often rely on knowledge other than language; for example, the sales director in an engineering firm needs to know her field, as well as the language. Nevertheless, as long as the teacher is aware of such limitations, task-based assessment remains a very useful technique.

Commercially available tests

Some business English classes focus primarily on passing a test at the end of the course, particularly if the learners do not have very specific needs. There may be any number of reasons for this. The sponsor may want an outside assessment of how effective the teaching has been, or learners may need a certificate in order to apply for a job. Learners are often more motivated to work hard if they know they have to pass a test at the end of the course, and the course itself will be designed with the test in mind (this effect on the course is sometimes called a **backwash** effect).

In such situations, teachers may prefer to use a commercially available test. Such tests are normally well thought out by professional testers, and give a good idea of general business English competence. Some tests, such as **TOEIC**® (Test Of English for International Communication) only examine certain language skills, such as reading and listening, but the results may be used to make assumptions about general competence. This compromise is attractive because of the relative ease of administering the test. **BEC** (Business English Certificate), on the other hand, also tests speaking and writing. BEC exams are consequently more complicated to administer, but may give a broader indication of general competence in the language (notwithstanding the difficulty of assessing spoken interaction, mentioned above). There are three levels of BEC test (Preliminary, Vantage, and Higher); there is a general description of the Higher exam at the top of page 128.

Some tests, like BEC, require takers to achieve a threshold score in order to pass. Others, like TOEIC, do not have a pass/fail threshold, but instead result in a score which can then be compared to a set of can-do statements (see Chapter 2). There is an example table from the TOEIC can-do guide at the bottom of page 128.

One problem with commercial tests is that they do not explicitly test the test taker in his or her own specialization. **SEFIC** (Spoken English for Industry and Commerce (London Chamber of Commerce and Industry)) tries to get past this problem by requiring candidates to give a presentation on a subject of their own choice (see page 129). This does not test the candidate in all relevant discourses, but goes some way to recognizing the

Test of Reading (1 hour)
In the Reading component there are six tasks of the following types: multiple choice, matching, word level gap-filling, sentence level gap-filling, multiple choice gap-filling, and error identification. The Reading component contributes 25% of the total marks.

Test of Writing (1 hour 10 minutes)
In the Writing component there are two tasks. In Part One candidates produce a short report (based on graphic input, approx. 120–140 words). In Part Two candidates choose whether to write a report, proposal, or piece of business correspondence. The Writing component contributes 25% of the total marks.

Test of Listening (approximately 40 minutes, including time for completion of answer sheets)
In the Listening component there are three tasks of the following types: gap-filling or note completion, matching, and multiple choice. Texts used are monologues and dialogues, including interviews, discussions, telephone conversations, and messages. The Listening component contributes 25% of the total marks.

Test of Speaking (approximately 16 minutes per pair of candidates)
The Speaking test is conducted by two external examiners and candidates are tested in pairs. At centres with an uneven number of candidates, the last single candidate is examined with the last pair in a group of three. (N.B. The group of three format may only be used to deal with uneven numbers, unexpected absence of candidates, illness etc. It is not an option that may be selected in normal circumstances where there is an even number of candidates at a session.)

There are four tasks in which each candidate responds to questions, gives a 'mini-presentation' lasting approximately one minute, takes part in a collaborative task with the other candidate, and takes part in a discussion with the other candidate and the interlocutor. The Speaking component contributes 25% of the total marks.

From CUP website www.cambridge-efl.org/exam/business/bg_bechigher.htm

TOEIC Reading Score of 5 - 100

	Reading	Writing
Can Do		
Can Do with Difficulty	• read, on storefronts, the type of store or services provided (e.g. "dry cleaning," "book store") • read and understand a restaurant menu • read and understand a train or bus schedule • read and understand traffic signs	
Cannot Do	• find information that I need in a telephone directory • read office memoranda written to me in which the writer has used simple words or sentences • read and understand simple, step-by-step instructions • read and understand an agenda for a meeting • read and understand a travel brochure • read and understand magazine articles like those found in _Time_ or _Newsweek_, without using a dictionary • read and understand directions and explanations presented in computer manuals written for beginning users • read highly technical material in my field or area of expertise with no use or only infrequent use of a dictionary • read and understand a popular novel • identify inconsistencies or differences in points of view in two newspaper interviews with politicians of opposing parties • read and understand a letter of thanks from a client or customer	• write a list for items to take on a weekend trip • write a one- or two-sentence thank-you note for a gift a friend sent to me • write a brief note to a co-worker explaining why I will not be able to attend the scheduled meeting • write a postcard to a friend describing what I have been doing on my vacation • fill out an application form for a class at night school • write clear directions on how to get to my house or apartment • write a letter requesting information about hotel accommodations for a future vacation • write a short note to a co-worker describing how to operate a standard piece of office equipment (e.g., photocopier, fax machine) • write a letter introducing myself and describing my qualifications to accompany an employment application • write a memorandum to my supervisor describing the progress being made on a current project or assignment • write a memorandum to my supervisor explaining why I need a new time off from work • write a complaint to a store manager about my dissatisfaction with an appliance I recently purchased • write a letter to a potential client describing the services and/or products of my company • write a 5-page formal report on a project in which I participated • write a memorandum summarizing the main points of a meeting I recently attended

1 of 10 | 11 x 8.5 in

© TOEIC® materials selected from the _TOEIC Can-Do Guide_, 2000

SPOKEN ENGLISH FOR INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE (SEFIC)

Fourth Level (40 minutes)

For those candidates who have gained a high degree of fluency in business or professional encounters and transactions in English. Candidates must be able to converse freely on topics of general interest, be able to explain and discuss a subject of their choice in depth, and use the specialist vocabulary appropriate to the subject chosen. Successful candidates will, for all practical purposes, have no language problem in any straightforward social or personal situation. They will have demonstrated the ability to conduct the normal business of their company in English and, in addition, they will be able to carry on specialist discussions within their own field without difficulty. The special subjects chosen by professional candidates will relate to selected aspects of their work but in other cases candidates may choose as their topic any special interest, study, or activity.

Section A (5 minutes)

General conversation

This will be an introductory conversation encompassing a variety of business-related topics (including one of current interest) enabling the candidate to demonstrate a wide range of vocabulary and expressions in both familiar and unfamiliar topic areas. (The candidate's special topic chosen for Section B will be excluded.)

Section B (15 minutes – of which the discussion will be a minimum of 5 minutes)

Presentation

Candidates will be asked to describe or demonstrate to the examiner some aspect of their work, or of a special subject, and to discuss it. Candidates must supply the examiner with a written synopsis (about 200 words) for ease of reference during the examination. This will not be assessed. Special subjects chosen by professional candidates will relate to a selected aspect of their work but in other cases a candidate may choose as a topic any special interest, study, or activity. In all cases the candidate must demonstrate the ability to use freely and accurately the appropriate specialist vocabulary. The Examiner will ask follow-up questions leading into the discussion phase in which the candidate will be expected to respond fully to a wide range of questions, providing examples and clarification as appropriate. This section is designed to test the ability to explain and discuss in depth, using the relevant technical or specialist vocabulary along with 'layman's language', a prepared subject of which the candidate has personal knowledge and/or experience and to demonstrate that a candidate could make a presentation in English that would command respect among peers.

Section C (10 minutes)

Listening Comprehension

Candidates will be asked to listen once to a recorded dialogue in English on a general workplace or business topic. They will then be asked to summarize for the examiner the substance of the conversation. Afterwards the candidate will be required to discuss and suggest a solution to the 'problematic' situation outlined by the speakers in the dialogue. (Candidates are permitted to make notes while listening to the recording.) This section is designed to test the candidates' ability to extract information from continuous dialogue in which they are not themselves involved and to test the candidates' ability to pass on by word of mouth information received aurally.

Section D (10 minutes)

Reading Comprehension

The candidate will be asked to study two or more sources of information (i.e. a report plus a graph or chart) supplied by the examiner. Questions will be posed by the examiner to assess the candidate's comprehension and powers of deduction. The topic area covered will be different from Section C. This section is designed to test the candidate's ability to absorb a written text, render its gist succinctly and discuss the content.

From www.lccieb.com/LCCI/

importance of the target language situation. Likewise, Pitman provides a test called English for Office Staff aiming to target specific types of discourse.

Tests can be marked **holistically,** which means that the markers try to get an overall impression of competence. **Analytic** marking, on the other hand, uses more detailed sets of specific criteria for the examiner to use. For example, the BEC speaking test mentioned on page 127 assesses candidates in terms of four separate criteria as follows: grammar and vocabulary, discourse management, pronunciation, and interactive communication.

Item types

Tests use a variety of **item** types (items are the individual tasks which are designed to elicit certain responses from test takers; together they make up a test). **Discrete point items** are designed to focus on specific linguistic elements, such as grammar or vocabulary. Here are some common item types, with examples (note that some item types share characteristics with others).

- **Multiple choice** – this consists of a statement, plus a selection of alternative statements (distracters); the test taker is required to choose one.

> *Tick the correct answer.*
>
> **A balance sheet is:**
> (a) a financial statement
> (b) something you put on your bed
> (c) a device for walking in a straight line
> (d) a type of sail

- **Matching** – this is a typical way to check lexical proficiency; for example, test takers match collocations, or sentence halves, or synonyms. Note, as in the example below (from *International Business English Unit 5* test sheet), how the item can be made more difficult by giving more than one match, or by using distracters.

> **Match the descriptions 1–5 to the different functions of a company.**
>
> 1 Creates new products.　　　　　　A administration
> 2 In charge of the welfare of　　　　B purchasing
> 　employees.　　　　　　　　　　　C personnel
> 3 Keeps a record of all payments　　D research & development
> 　made and received.　　　　　　　E sales & marketing
> 4 Orders all supplies needed.　　　　F production
> 5 Provides office services, e.g.　　　G accounts
> 　typing.　　　　　　　　　　　　H legal
>
> From http://uk.cambridge.org/elt/nibe/teachers/intro.htm

- **Gap-fill** – this describes items where words or phrases have been removed from sentences or texts, and may or may not be given to the test taker. There is an example from a progress test using sentences at the top of page 132.

- **Information transfer** – the test taker is required to transfer information from one source to another, as in the task at the bottom of page 132. This is very common in listening tasks, where the test taker is asked to listen and then react in some way to what has just been heard. This can be done using multiple choice or gap-fills (see page 130).

- **Comprehension** – a comprehension test seeks to find out whether or not the test taker has understood a particular text (spoken or written). The example at the top of page 133 is from the TOEIC test uses multiple choice questions to do this.

- **Error correction** – error correction items simply ask test takers to find and correct the errors. These are often used to check grammatical accuracy, as in the example at the bottom of page 133.

- **Open ended** – an open-ended item is one which does not require a specific answer. For example, if the oral examiner asks, 'Tell me about your job', the answers can be wide ranging. Or a written test might ask the test taker to recommend a particular conference venue based on extracts from brochures. In **SET** (Spoken English Test for Business (Pitman)), the assessment is based on a tape-recording of a 1-to-1 conversation with an interlocutor.

Using computers

Computer-based tests (CBT) (as compared to **pen and paper testing**) refer to tests that have been put on a computer. There are many possible reasons for this; feedback is normally relatively fast and accurate, and computers are ideal when large numbers of candidates are involved. It is also relatively easy to incorporate visuals and listening elements. CBT can be tailor-made for specific solutions, such as placement tests delivered via a company internet, but are also available commercially. One disadvantage is that the test may not be exactly equivalent to a paper test – for example, if test takers are not used to computers (e.g. handling a mouse), then this will affect the results.

Computer-adaptive tests (CAT) are CBTs where the computer selects items based on the response of the test taker to the previous item. So, for example, if a test taker answers three consecutive items correctly, the next item will be harder. After another three correct responses the level goes up again. Once the test taker starts getting wrong answers the level goes back down. In this way it is possible to find a test taker's level fairly quickly, providing, of course, that the test items have been correctly graded. This can be impractical if the teacher is designing his or her own tests – however, a professional testing organization will have **item banks** (collections of items) which have been checked by a large number of test takers and compared against other (known) items. This ensures a high degree of reliability. CATs are fast to take, and have the great advantage that test takers do not have to answer questions which are far too easy or far too difficult.

▮ **1** Yesterday   **10 marks**

Complete the conversation. Use *was, were, wasn't* or *weren't*.

A Where _____ _____ you yesterday?

B At work. I rang you but you _____ in.

A I _____ in London. There _____ a

meeting about the new distribution system. Why

_____ you there?

B I didn't know it about it.

A The new project manager wanted to speak to you.

She _____ very pleased when she found

out you _____ there. Didn't you see the

e-mail about it?

B No. Who else _____ there?

A Everyone. Why didn't you read your e-mail?

B I _____ too busy. I thought it

_____ important.

From *Business Objectives (Teacher's Book)*
by Phillips & Phillips

Stationery Supplies International

CUSTOMER SERVICES / ORDER AMENDMENT FORM

Customer: Fenmore Consultants / Jennifer Gardiner

Order No: **(1)** ....

PROBLEMS

- paper: ordered A5 not A4
- envelopes: ordered **(2)** .... not white
- ink cartridges: ordered 20 Trujet **(3)** ....

COMMENTS

Correct items to be sent out tonight by **(4)** ....

From *BEC Vantage practice tests*

Questions 178–180 refer to the following magazine article.

> Lorraine Kulasingam has worked in the fashion industry as a stylist for ten years, choosing the clothing that models and movie stars wear for on-camera appearances. "I'm the one who decides how the actors look," she says. "I love it. Every day is different." Although Lorraine routinely meets famous movie stars, there is a disadvantage to her job: she often works 18-hour days, and she has to accommodate everyone's schedule. "It's pretty tiring," she admits. "But I wouldn't change careers for anything."

178. What is indicated about Ms. Kulasingam's job?

(A) She has recently changed careers.
(B) She often works very long days.
(C) She gets tired of doing the same thing.
(D) She recently received a promotion.

179. What does Ms. Kulasingam do in her job?

(A) Hires the models who appear in advertisements
(B) Selects clothing for film stars and models
(C) Organizes filming of television programs
(D) Takes pictures for the fashion industry

180. What could be considered a benefit of her position?

(A) Meeting famous people
(B) Receiving free accommodation
(C) Being able to set her own work hours
(D) Being in a management-level position

From *TOEIC Official Test-Preparation Guide*

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❶ Mass and count nouns. *Some/ any/ a lot (of)/ much/ many*

Five of the sentences below have a grammatical mistake. Find the mistakes. Write the correct sentences.

1 Could you give me an information, please?
2 Would you like some wine?
3 I didn't buy much fruit.
4 He gave me some useful advices.
5 The news is not very good.
6 I did a lot of exercises at the gym.
7 How many money did you spend?
8 I haven't got some paper.
9 Many people attended the conference.
10 He has much experience in marketing.

From *International Express Pre-Intermediate Student's Book* by Taylor

Choosing a test

There are various factors to think about before a teacher is in a position to advise business English learners about which test to choose. First of all, what is the reason for doing the test – is it to apply for a job, for example, or to enter a training programme? In both cases, the employer or organizer may demand success either in a given proficiency test, or up to a certain level – which can be indicated by test success or score. If so, then the organization may dictate which test to choose. However, it is important that teachers (and the people who use the results of the tests to make decisions) fully understand what the test result actually means. For example, if the test gives a score out of 500, with plus or minus 10% accuracy, then it would seem not justifiable to differentiate between a person who has scored 390 and another who has scored 430. Within the limitations of the test scoring system, both candidates have performed equally well. This is one reason why some examination boards use a simple statement of 'Distinction', 'Pass', or 'Fail', rather than numbers, which suggest a precision which does not necessarily exist. Such issues need to be taken into account where a minimum score is required to gain university admission, for example. Other practical factors will also influence the decision:

- **Time** – some tests are only available on certain days/dates in the year.
- **Location** – tests are often carried out only in authorized test centres.
- **Registration** – some testing organizations require early registration, but this may not be practical (for example, if the HR department is still awaiting budget confirmation, they may not be able to register in time).
- **Support materials** – some tests have readily available practice and support material.
- **Cost**.
- **Chances of success** – ideally the teacher should advise learners to take tests which they have a reasonably good chance of passing, otherwise the only beneficiary is the testing organization.
- **Currency** – is the test acceptable in the relevant marketplace (for example, an exam-based qualification well known in one country may not be recognized elsewhere)?
- **Certificate** – specific testimonials or details (e.g. can-do statements) may be more useful to prospective employers than a test score. In some places, certificates come in an identity-card format, including photo, to prevent fraud.
- **Correlation with other tests** – sometimes studies are available that provide comparisons with other tests.
- **Relevance to workplace** – some sponsors will only pay for a test if it will benefit the organization (they may want to know, for example, if the discourse types tested are relevant to the workplace).
- **Notification of results** – some tests take months to confirm results, which may be too late for some candidates.

Evaluating using feedback and observation

Testing learners' language skills is one of the main ways to find out how successful a course has been, and usually gives results that are **quantitative**, making the data convenient to record, manipulate, and compare. However, there are other ways to evaluate a course (or materials, or the teaching).

Checking the reaction of the learners is a standard form of **qualitative** evaluation, and there are different ways to do this. **Plenary** discussion (that is, discussing with the whole group) can be very useful, and can take place at any point in the course; the participants simply sit around in a circle and discuss various issues that have arisen, or make suggestions for the future. The discussion may include other stakeholders, such as department heads, course sponsors etc. Participants can also be asked to write comments on a **feedback sheet**, prompted by a series of questions. The following questions, for example, may be handed out at the end of a course:

What I liked about the course:
What I didn't like about the course:
Possible improvements:

Some participants may not wish to put their feelings in writing, however, or might prefer a more anonymous method, or may find it difficult to be completely honest if they feel the teacher will recognize their writing, so an alternative is to use a board laid out as below. Learners are given stickers to place on the board, in a position which best reflects their feelings. The teacher leaves the room and returns to find a completed board which can then be used as a basis for discussion.

	☺	☺	☹
Classroom facilities			
Course content			
Materials			
Teaching style			

Another alternative is to incorporate feedback into some sort of activity, such as a simulation. Here is an example, which can be done orally or in writing:

Congratulations. You have reached the end of the course. One of your colleagues has heard about the course, and is interested in doing it himself. He wants to know your opinion about how useful the course has been to your job. Tell him about the course, including the topics you covered, the types of activities that you did, and what you most liked and disliked.

In some schools and companies, feedback sheets are filled in by the participants and sent directly to the school – not via the teacher. This has the advantage that learners are more likely to write what they really feel, because they think they are not causing the teacher to lose face or resent their critical comments. In a monolingual class, this may be done in the learners' own language, which has the advantage that learners can express their feelings and opinions more fluently than they might be able to in

English. Some schools may use these forms as a basis for employment – teachers with low scores may not be asked back. Here is an example of a feedback sheet:

	I agree ... I disagree	Comments
The trainer was well organized.	1 ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... 5 ...	
The training objectives were made clear to me.	1 ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... 5 ...	
The trainer handled the equipment efficiently.	1 ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... 5 ...	
The training was delivered in a logical sequence.	1 ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... 5 ...	
The course content was appropriate for my level.	1 ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... 5 ...	
The trainer's feedback was useful.	1 ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... 5 ...	
The content was relevant to my workplace.	1 ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... 5 ...	
I recommend that we use this trainer again.		Yes / No
Do you have any suggestions for improvements?		

Many schools will ask an experienced teacher to evaluate another teacher in action. This will give another perspective on how the learners react to the teacher, and will also enable the teacher and the school to reflect on a teacher's ability (see section on page 137 on the reflective practitioner). Here are some areas such an observer might focus on:

Before:
Class history – How long has the class been running? Is attendance regular? What are the needs of the class?
Lesson plan – Does it have clear aims? Is there a variety of activity types? Does it allow flexibility?
Lesson content – Is it relevant to learner needs?

During:
Management of activities – Are learners aware of the activity aims? Are instructions clear? Are supporting materials helpful? Do all learners take part?
Feedback – Is it appropriate? Is it useful?
Rapport – Is there good rapport between the teacher and learners?

After:
Class assessment – How does the teacher see the relative strengths and weaknesses in the class? What are priorities for future lessons?

The reflective practitioner

Another form of evaluation relies on conscious reflection about what is going on in the classroom. Sometimes this can be quick, simple, and informal – making a decision in the classroom, based on the rapid assessment of something that has just happened. But it can also involve a more systematic approach. Typical methods include discussing issues with colleagues, attending workshops and conferences, reading and keeping up to date with the literature, keeping diaries and journals, and carrying out **action research**. This consists of teachers themselves doing small-scale research to analyse what is happening in their classroom and then trying to find better ways of doing things, the effects of which are, in turn, observed. There are normally five stages to the process:

1 Find an area to examine or improve.
2 Plan the change.
3 Act (implement the change).
4 Observe the results of the action.
5 Reflect on the results.

Of course, this process can be cyclical in nature if, based on the observation and reflection, further improvements are planned and carried out. Here are examples of action research carried out in business English classrooms.

- **Teaching approach** – the teacher was not sure that learners were benefiting from an approach to teaching grammar which entailed the teacher explaining a new verb form, followed by the learners doing exercises designed to give controlled practice and freer practice (they always seemed to make the same mistakes, no matter how often the forms were covered). Having read up on other methods, he decided that on the next course he would change to a method of teaching where new forms were presented less overtly – learners were given texts containing the new forms, and asked to try and deduce how the form was being used. End-of-course test results showed no significant improvement in results. After discussion with colleagues he decided that this might be due to the fact that learners have different learning styles, so he tried another change which combined the two methods. This time the end-of-course results did show some improvement.

- **Learning strategies** – learners in the class were not convinced that vocabulary notebooks were effective. So the teacher made a careful note of new vocabulary introduced in the classroom, but asked the learners to include only some of these words in their notebooks. A subsequent test proved to the learners that they were better able to recall the vocabulary which they had written down in their notebooks.

- **Teacher instructions** – a teacher felt that she was not particularly good at giving instructions which everyone in the class understood. One of the reasons for this was probably the low language level of the learners concerned. The teacher decided to videotape a few classes, and see if improvements could be made – perhaps she was talking too fast, or using too many difficult words. The results showed clearly that the teacher

never checked whether or not her instructions had been understood. Consequently, she made sure that she did this every time.

Perhaps the best way to evaluate ourselves as teachers is to consider formal training or development which will allow us to reflect on key issues, as well as benefit from other teachers' experience. There are a number of courses designed for business English teachers, ranging from short workshops concentrating on particular topics like materials development, initial training courses such as the LCCI Cert FTBE, right up to masters and doctoral level degrees (see Chapter notes and further reading, on page 156). Many of these courses are offered on a part-time and/or distance basis, and are designed to allow the practitioner to reflect on their specific teaching context.

The customer's perspective

So far we have looked at evaluation largely from the learners' or teachers' perspective. However, as we have seen, the customers – who may not necessarily be the same people as the learners themselves – may be interested in more than whether or not the participants were satisfied, or the course objectives met. What a corporate sponsor probably wants to know is the impact of the course at the workplace, and how it benefits the company. An educational establishment might be interested in the effect the course may have on its marketing strategies, or on its overall reputation.

Understanding costs is a fundamental part of the business English teacher's trade, particularly in an in-company context. Some costs are fairly self-explanatory (hiring people, providing equipment, administration, materials), but companies often find that other, less immediately obvious, costs are more significant. **Opportunity** costs are related to the fact that learners on a course are then not available to do their 'real' jobs (the work that they are paid to do, and which benefits the company) – if the course participants are five highly-paid senior managers, then the cost of the teacher's fees is insignificant in comparison. **Waiting** costs refer to the costs incurred because a company has to wait for training to be carried out. For example, a company which has received a licence to do business in an English-speaking country, but has no staff who can speak English, will incur a loss of potential income until staff can be trained. If the school cannot deliver the training for a couple of weeks then this cost will be taken into account. Finally, **interference** costs are incurred because the training interferes with other people – for example, the staff in the departments belonging to the managers who are on a course may not be able to carry out their jobs properly because their manager is absent.

Of course, cost itself is rarely the sole deciding factor – it is how these costs relate to the benefits of the teaching which is more important. Organizations normally use one of the following approaches to help them think about this **cost/benefit** relationship.

- **Payback** looks at a straight comparison between the cost of the training, and the savings made (or new income earned) in consequence, and asks how readily will the costs be covered by the savings (income).

- **The cost/benefit ratio** compares the cost of the training with the benefits, both *tangible* and *intangible*. The latter might include benefits like improved work climate, reduced stress, enhanced customer relations, motivation, and so on. Clearly, such benefits are almost impossible to quantify in financial terms; nevertheless such estimates, however inaccurate, may be taken into account when the course is evaluated.

- **Return on Investment** (ROI) is essentially the inverse ratio ('return' being the 'benefit'), but views the transaction as an *investment*, rather than focusing on cost and viewing it as a situation where resources are spent.

A potential client may take this one step further and compare the cost/benefit ratios of alternative investments. For example, a company might wish to compare the cost/benefit of using interpreters against the cost/benefit of language training, or the cost/benefit of recruiting English-speaking staff against the cost/benefit of training them. In other words, they ask the question: Is this the best way to spend our money? Often companies will ask several schools to submit quotations for business English training, and then choose the one which appears to offer the best ROI.

Calculating such factors may be done by rule of thumb, but many HR departments will be required to submit some sort of analysis before decisions are made. Most teachers will not be involved in the detail of such calculations, but they will be directly affected by them. For example, it may be important for freelance teachers who want to charge a bit more than their competitors to point out (diplomatically) that their fee is actually a very small part of the overall equation. Likewise, an awareness of opportunity and interference costs will help the teacher to understand why it is (for example) that the managers are only available to do the course in the evenings, even though their learning potential may be considerably diminished by the fact that they have been at their desks all day. Finally, the business English teacher needs to keep in mind that sponsors need to be able to see the benefits of training. Meeting the boss and discussing these benefits may have more influence on how he or she evaluates the course than all the tests and feedback sheets in the world.

Conclusion
In this chapter we noted that business English courses may be evaluated at different levels and from different perspectives. Evaluation can focus on:
- testing techniques, such as task-based assessment and commercially available tests, which can be used to indicate the extent of the learning.
- reactions of the participants, using discussion and feedback forms that focus on the content of the course, as well as on the teacher.
- the teacher using a variety of reflective approaches, including action research, in order to improve the teaching and learning process.
- the customer's requirement to analyse the costs and benefits of a course.

Task File

Introduction

- The exercises in this section all relate to topics discussed in the chapter to which the exercises refer. In some cases, material from other chapters may also be relevant.
- Some questions asked here expect definite answers, while others ask only for the reader's ideas and opinions.
- Tutors can decide when it is appropriate to use the tasks in this section. Readers on their own can work on the tasks at any stage in their reading of the book.
- An answer key is provided after the Task File (on pages 150–155) for those tasks where it is possible to provide specific or suggested answers.
- The material in the Task File can be photocopied for use in limited circumstances. Please see the note on page ii for photocopying restrictions.

What is special about business English?

A

Read the following statements about business English. What are the main arguments for and against each statement?

1 The job of the business English teacher is to teach language; we are not qualified to teach business skills such as presentations or negotiations.

2 There is no such thing as 'business English'. English used by business people is normal English, with some specialist words depending on where people work.

3 People who learn business English in universities and colleges have very little in common with people who work in the world of real business.

4 The language of business is international – national varieties of English are irrelevant to business English teachers.

5 There is no point teaching business English to beginners.

6 Business English teachers, trainers, and consultants all do the same thing – they teach English to business people. So why not call them all teachers?

7 Business is serious, and business English teachers should not waste time on fun and games in the classroom.

B

Read the following transcript. What could you say about its register and genre? What features enable you to decide?

A Hello?
B Good morning, John. Tom.
A Good morning. That was quick.
B (*laughing*) Well, these emails are fantastic things.
A How are you?
B Very well, thanks. I rang about er well just before I sent you that email and the lady said oh he's not in to work yet.
A got in …
B (*laughing*)
A … just about when you called actually.
B Oh, really. I thought she was joking. I thought you were in work at sort of half past six every morning.
A No, no, no.

TASK FILE
Chapter
2

Assessing needs and preferences

A

Imagine that you want to learn a new language, and have engaged a teacher for 1-to-1 lessons. What will you make sure the teacher knows about you before you start your course?

B

Salvatore, Bettina, and Gianni all work in the same company. Salvatore (aged 54) is the manager of a sales department. Bettina (aged 33) is a management accountant who specializes in advising managers on financial issues. Gianni (aged 37) is the manager of the Human Resources department. They all had English lessons at school, and they can all function perfectly well in most of the business situations where they need to use English. However, they have just been told that they are to be sent to Chile for a six-month period, to work on a new project. They have come to you for training. What additional information would you like to have, before you can advise them?

C

You have just started work as a business English teacher in a university which specializes in business studies. Your students expect to graduate after 3–4 years with a qualification that will enable them to enter companies at a management level. Your department head has asked you to make a presentation about the content of the course you will be running. What information do you need before you can make the presentation?

D

You work for a small language school which runs courses in business English. You have just been told that you are to substitute for a colleague who is going on holiday for three months. You know that the class consists of 12 learners from different companies. What will you ask him before he leaves?

E

A French architect phones you and asks for 1-to-1 training. She wants to prepare for meetings which she will have with a client in New York. She sounded quite fluent on the phone, but you only spoke for a few minutes. Prepare for your first meeting with her.

F

Prepare a list of questions you might ask the owner of a small taxi company who has hired you to teach his drivers English. Luckily, he himself speaks excellent English.

TASK FILE
Chapter
3

Designing a course

A

Write down at least five performance objectives which might be associated with this aim:

Participants will become more effective in their use of English within the context of formal meetings with their Thai counterparts.

B

You have been asked to design a course for a group of 20 university students, all of whom are studying economics. You will see the students once a week for two hours at a time. Make notes about the syllabus and types of activities you might use.

C

You have just had your first lesson with the 20 university students mentioned in B above, and to your dismay have found that the language level within the group varies from lower intermediate to advanced. How will this affect your syllabus and choice of activities?

D

Compare three syllabuses from coursebooks you are familiar with. How do they differ? Can you identify any common threads?

E

Imagine you are going to run a week-long course for eight managers in a hotel. Besides the teaching materials and the standard equipment provided by the hotel (e.g. flipchart, overhead projector, whiteboard, camera, audio and video recording equipment), what other equipment might you need to organize?

TASK FILE
Chapter
4

Selecting and developing materials

☞ **A**

'Familiarity with materials does seem to me one of the great requirements of professional BE teachers, because it enables them to meet the needs of their learners more accurately within the time available.' (Michael Sneyd: *IATEFL BESIG Issues* 3/2004). Assuming you agree with this statement, how do you as a BE teacher plan to become familiar with what is available on the market? (If you disagree with the statement, justify your position.)

☞ **B**

Here is an extract from the introduction to the teacher's book of *Double Dealing* by James Schofield. Do you agree with the sentiments expressed? If you do, how would you incorporate his arguments into a syllabus for your learners? If you do not agree, what evidence would you use to refute his arguments?

'Why are business English books always so serious?' This was the question that I kept being asked by students as they turned the page of their coursebook to find yet another earnest article about business ethics or company downsizing, culled from the business press and adapted for classroom use. And the practice exercises! Yes, my students needed to learn how to use the telephone, write emails, and handle the passive. But did it always have to be in the context of ordering pencils, arranging a visit to a factory, or describing how the photocopier worked? Wherever I looked, I nearly always found a sameness and blandness that made all the major coursebooks indistinguishable, with forgettable titles that morphed into a dull, pseudo-business blur.

Which was strange, because I didn't find business dull at all. Many of the people I met as a teacher had tales to tell of money, sex, greed, and scams – all connected with their business life in some way or other. They wanted to use their English to tell stories because they were interesting, and I was agog.

☞ **C**

Imagine you were about to teach a course in a company specializing in nanotechnology; the board of directors is planning to take the company into new markets, and has decided to invest in an English-language training programme as part of its preparations. Having just heard you talking about authentic materials, the managing director asks you what specific documents you might find useful. What would you answer? Make a list, and then compare your answer with what is suggested in Chapter 4's section on authentic materials.

TASK FILE
Chapter
5

Teaching business speaking skills

A

Here is a transcript of a story. Very little punctuation has been used in the transcription. How would you chunk it? (see Chapter 1, page 9, and Chapter 5, page 72). What expressions do you think your learners might find useful? What other features might you point out to your learners, if any?

A So how did you did you get the job?

B Well actually it's a funny story I

A (laughs)

B Have a feeling that somebody from my old company recommended me although I don't know why I was working at the bank at the time erm anyway the boss presumably heard my name in a good context and anyway this man Giorgio Sabatini erm mentioned my name and recommended me to another lady who I'd never met called Heidi who was German I think it's a very funny story actually it's incredible from one point of view this is the honest to God truth I got my job at the bank and it was something like 20 hours a week no sorry tell a lie it was 18 hours a week and

A Right

B And I knew I couldn't live on the money

A Hmm

B Having worked at JL's on a 30 hour contract

A Yeah yeah

B Erm and so I said that if you want me to stay you'll have to give me another job

A Right

B That's the truth that's what I said erm and I really didn't do anything else erm I said I just have to keep my eyes and ears open

A Yeah

B Anyway as I said it's a funny story I'd never met this lady before erm I mentioned to a friend an Italian friend that I was looking for work in in casual conversation and er erm she said er she said something about she knew a lady called Heidi the next thing I knew this woman rang me up

A Hmm

B Never met her

A Right

B Anyway we had a little chat I didn't know why she rang me actually I couldn't make head or tail of the conversation erm but I guess she was sorting me out.

A Right

B Anyway half an hour later she rang back and said would you like a job at Loray's and I said wonderful and she said well no she said would you like an interview and I interviewed and that's how it worked

A Right

B So it was most peculiar most bizarre like a bombshell literally

B

Write role-cards for the following role-plays:
- A meeting to discuss the possible purchase of new premises in a foreign city.
- Chatting to a potential customer, making them feel good before a sale.
- A telephone call to a colleague, telling her that you can't make a meeting because you urgently need to visit a supplier, and asking for a postponement.

TASK FILE
Chapter
6

Teaching business writing skills

A

A business English teacher carries out the following activities during a normal day's training. Which ones might be related to a process approach to teaching writing, and which to a genre approach?

1 Sitting down with learners and brainstorming a list of possible themes to include in a letter.
2 Examining several emails, selecting three, and highlighting particular expressions. Then photocopying these as handouts for a lesson.
3 Discussing the advantages and disadvantages of using mind maps to organize ideas and information.
4 Asking learners to look through a text and underline words and expressions used to make comparisons.
5 Dividing a text into different sections, mixing them up, and then asking learners to rearrange the sections in the correct order.

B

Teachers normally use a blend of activities from both process and genre approaches to teach writing. Reconsider the above activities within the context of a group of intermediate learners wishing to improve their email writing skills. In what order might the activities be done? What other activities might be included?

C

Here is an extract from a contract:

This Agreement is made between ... of ... (hereinafter referred to as **Sponsor**), and ... of ... (hereinafter referred to as **Trainer**) on June 16 2004.

Sponsor will make available certain confidential and proprietary information to Trainer. Such information may include, but is not restricted to, product specifications, manuals, business plans, marketing plans, reports, contracts, and correspondence. Such information may be submitted orally or in written form.

Trainer agrees that the information is to be considered confidential and proprietary to Sponsor, and shall not use the information other than for the purpose of language training with Sponsor. Trainer will not disclose, publish, or otherwise reveal any of the information to any other party whatsoever except with the specific prior written authorization of Sponsor.

- What sort of contract or agreement do you think it is?
- How might you modify or adapt it (if at all) to use it as material to teach:
    A group of experienced business people.
    A group of university students.
    A group of technicians in a factory.

PHOTOCOPIABLE

TASK FILE
Chapter
7

How to teach business English at a distance

A

Think about a learner you are familiar with. This learner approaches you and tells you that he/she would like some self-study materials. What would you advise?

B

One of your regular 1-to-1 students tells you that he has just been posted to somewhere in the Middle East, where he will be in charge of a team tasked with examining the local transport infrastructure. The project is likely to take four months. During this time he is keen to maintain contact with you and keep working on his English. He will have access to a telephone and a laptop with email. What might you suggest?

C

You work in a university language centre, helping accountancy students improve their English. Most of the students are fairly advanced, but not all. Your boss has suggested that you organize remedial training for those who need it. Since she cannot pay you for extra hours, she suggests that you use the Internet. Develop a plan.

D

Your institution has just installed a number of computers with Internet access in a refurbished classroom. You know you are going to be away for a couple of weeks in the near future, and you intend to make use of the new facilities for one of your classes. The learners in the class are approximately CEF level C1 (see page 22), and are project managers from a local sewage company. They are easily capable of working unsupervised, but will need an interesting task to keep them motivated. What can you do?

E

A company Human Resources manager approaches you and asks you to investigate a blended learning course which is being run by a local language school. The learners on the course have complained about a number of issues, including inadequate materials, poor feedback from the teachers, and unreliable technology. He asks you to interview the learners and the teachers in order to find out what is happening, and hopefully improve the situation. Write down five key questions you would ask as part of this investigation.

**TASK FILE
Chapter
8**

How to include intercultural training

A

Read the following accounts of a lesson. What might have gone wrong?

I have been teaching business English for 5 years, mostly in the UK. I have a lot of experience working with people from all over the world, from a range of different industries, and I enjoy my job very much. I have a masters degree in linguistics, and consider myself fairly competent. I have recently become very interested in intercultural training, and have read quite a lot about it. I generally use case studies in my intercultural classes, because I find that business people can relate to real-life situations. However, my last group was 'difficult' and decided they knew it all already.   **Teacher**

Our group consisted of eight managers from our company. None of us knew each other, which is hardly surprising since there are over 300,000 people in our company, from 150 different countries. We had been sent to the UK to do an advanced course in business English, and were looking forward to a week away from the stresses of normal work. Most of the training was good, but the intercultural element focused on one or two examples of a British pharmaceutical company and its problems setting up factories in other parts of the world. Boring and irrelevant.   **Learner**

B

You have been asked to help prepare a group of 30 university graduates for a work placement overseas. You wish to use a number of different activities, but have limited time (3 hours). In such a situation, what are the advantages and disadvantages of the following methods?
• Lectures
• Role-plays
• Critical incidents
• Discussions
• Films

C

One of your learners (a senior manager from France) has just told you that he has to give an important presentation in English to a group of Chinese engineers. He has never been to China, and has never had any dealings with Chinese people. What will you do to help him?

D

One of your learners (a Spanish investment banker) has just told you that she has to give an important presentation in English to a group of Indian computer game designers. She knows very little about the computer gaming industry, and tells you that she rarely has to give presentations to anyone except bankers. What will you do to help her?

**TASK FILE
Chapter
9**

Evaluating and assessing

A

Your boss asks you to evaluate a new coursebook which the school is thinking about introducing. How would you go about the task?

B

You have been asked to run a one-week course for some managers from a Swiss soft drinks company. The company wants the course to be hotel-based, and has asked you to select a suitable venue. How will you decide which hotel to recommend? Draw up a list of factors you will need to consider.

C

Think about a learner you are familiar with. This learner approaches you and tells you that he/she would like to do a commercially available business English language test and obtain a recognized certificate. Which test would you recommend, and why?

D

You work in-company. Your HR manager calls you on the phone and tells you that he has just sent a job applicant down to your office for an 'English test'. He tells you that the job entails getting spare parts from various suppliers in different parts of the world to various customers, also in different parts of the world. The HR manager says that providing you confirm that the applicant's English is ok, he will get the job. What will you do?

E

Carry out a small-scale action research project relevant to your own teaching context. Choose from one of the following topics:
• How I give feedback.
• How I teach presentation skills.
• How I give instructions.
• How I motivate my learners.

Task File Key

Chapter 1

A Here are some points to consider; you may think of others.

FOR	AGAINST
1 Language teachers have been trained to teach language. They may have worked in business, but this does not mean that they are business communication experts; teachers should recognize their own limitations.	Language competence and related business communication skills are inextricably linked to each other; business English users need the language to work *in practice*, and it is not only linguistic skills that determine that.
2 Business people are normal people who need to communicate within a specific context, but the basic means is the same.	Business English users have priorities and aims, quite distinct from those of normal life, which are reflected in the way they communicate.
3 Young students have only had 'second-hand' access to the world of business.	They have already had access to the world of business via their own experience of life. Now they are merely changing contexts.
4 Learners need to be able to deal with other non-native speakers, so a simplified form of 'international' English makes more sense.	In reality, teachers inevitably use the variety they are most familiar with as a model. Some learners will have to deal with particular varieties of English.
5 Beginners need to learn the basics of the language first, before moving on to look at English in specific contexts.	It is possible to cover basics within a business context relevant to the learners' needs.
6 A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.	The business world has certain expectations, and one of them is that employees need to be *trained* (not merely *educated*) to do specific things. Consultants do more than teach – they also give professional advice outside the classroom, and are paid accordingly.
7 Far better to use valuable time focusing on specific learner communication needs.	Fun and games increase motivation and enhance learning, when used appropriately.

B **Register:** informal, friendly, bantering. A and B seem to know each other reasonably well (but not so intimately that B knows A's working hours).
Genre: opening section of phone call (probably, but not definitely, business-related).
Features: ritual language (*hello, good morning, good morning, how are you, very well, thanks*), small talk before getting down to the 'real' reason for the call, utterances not always particularly well-formed, and speakers changing direction mid-stream.

Chapter 2

Here are some points to consider; you may add others.
A Your lessons will certainly benefit if your teacher knows about your views about language learning, your language learning history, the time you have available for lessons and homework, and your reasons for learning the new language.

B Details about the types of discourses they will have to deal with (see Chapter 2, page 20 for specific ideas), information about the project, and their own roles and responsibilities.

C You need to identify the **training gap** (see Chapter 2, page 15), assess what means you have to close the gap, and decide on priorities. You will also need information about the learners' own needs and expectations.

D You need to know about the course aims and objectives, current levels within the group, the syllabus (and how it was designed), the materials being used, as well as a summary of what has been done so far in the course. Information about learning styles, relationships within the class, and attendance figures would also be useful.

E Your first meeting will be a needs analysis, and will focus on her current ability as well as the types of discourse that she will need to deal with. It will be important to find out if she has any particular concerns. It would also help if you knew something about what architects do, and something about New York.

F Possible questions might include: How many participants? When can we carry out placement tests? What do you wish to achieve with this training? Where and when is the training to take place? How much are you prepared to pay?

Chapter 3

A A possible answer might be: **At the end of the course participants will be able to** [1] follow appropriate rules of procedure, [2] read and understand typical agendas and minutes, [3] use appropriate language to ask for and give clarification, [4] use appropriate language to make suggestions, give opinions, and summarize discussions, [5] give impromptu presentations to explain and inform.

B The answer will depend on the teacher's own experience and beliefs about how language learning takes place, but will need to take into account the fact that the students are pre-experienced. The syllabus should reflect the fact that students will probably use English within the field of economics, which suggests using economics topics as a framework. The key point to make about activities is that they should be varied, since two hours can seem like a long time to maintain a group's concentration and interest.

C You may decide to divide the class and use different input material for different levels, or you may decide to use the same input material, but give students different tasks. Other options include pairing strong students with weaker students, using open-ended tasks (i.e. with no specific response), giving weaker students more homework, so that they can work to close the gap between the different language levels, and making the group aware of the challenges imposed by a mixed-ability class. It will be important to make sure that each learner receives praise for his or her efforts.

D Open exercise.

E The list might include: pens (check they work), something for sticking posters to the walls or a pin board, adhesive tape, hole punch, Internet access, duct tape (for cabling), posters, name cards, OHP pens, dictionaries, examples of coursebooks and/or CD-ROMs, self-study books, freebies

(e.g. company bags, pens), name badges, glue stick, scissors, stapler, business cards, sticky labels, spare bulbs, spare batteries, drinking water, small sweets or mints, clock, writing pads, card, spare paper etc.

Chapter 4

A A possible answer might include: discuss materials with other teachers, regularly visit publisher websites, join BE email discussion lists (e.g. www.besig.org), read reviews in teacher publications, attend conferences, attend teacher development workshops or courses, obtain sample copies from publishers, browse through books at bookshops.

B Open exercise.

C See Chapter 4, page 52.

Chapter 5

A Possible answer: // denotes pauses between chunks; possible useful expressions are in **bold** (but will depend on the class in question).

Features: repetition (*did you did you, it's a funny story*), backchannelling (*right, yeah*), reported speech (*so I said that if you want me to stay you'll ... , she said something about ...*), use of past tense (*recommended, mentioned*), use of *and* etc.

A So // how did you // did you // get the job?

B Well // actually // **it's a funny story** // I

A (*laughs*)

B Have a feeling that // somebody from my old company recommended me // although I don't know why // **I was working at the bank at the time** // erm anyway the boss presumably heard my name in a good context // and anyway this man Giorgio Sabatini erm // **mentioned my name** // and recommended me to another lady // who I'd never met // called Heidi // who was German // I think // it's a very funny story // actually // it's incredible from one point of view // this is the honest to God truth // I got my job at the bank // and it was something like // 20 hours a week // no sorry tell a lie // it was 18 hours a week // and //

A Right //

B And I knew // **I couldn't live on the money** //

A Hmm //

B Having worked at JL's on a 30 hour contract //

A Yeah yeah //

B Erm // and so I said that if you want me to stay // you'll have to give me another job

A Right //

B That's the truth // that's what I said // erm and **I really didn't do anything else** // erm I said I just have **to keep my eyes and ears open** //

A Yeah //

B Anyway // as I said // it's a funny story // I'd never met this lady before // erm I mentioned to a friend // an Italian friend // that I was looking for work // in in casual conversation // and er erm she said er // she said something about // she knew a lady called Heidi // **the next thing I knew** // this woman rang me up

A Hmm //

B Never met her //

A Right //

B Anyway // **we had a little chat** // I didn't know why she rang me // actually // I couldn't make head or tail of the conversation // erm but I guess she was sorting me out.//

A Right //

B Anyway // half an hour later // she rang back // and said //would you like a job at Loray's // and I said wonderful // and she said well // no she said // would you like an interview // and I interviewed // and that's how it worked

A Right

B So it was most peculiar // most bizarre // like a bombshell literally

B Possible role-play cards might be along these lines:

You are the marketing/financial/production/HR manager of a medium-sized company based in (your city). You are meeting other managers to discuss the possible purchase of new premises in (foreign city). It has already been agreed that there needs to be enough room for six employees. You believe that the premises should be in the expensive part of town, in order to impress potential clients / in the cheap part of town, in order to save costs / near an airport, in order to minimize travelling time / roomy and comfortable, in order to motivate staff.

Look at the information supplied about available premises, and decide which one you think the company should buy. Then persuade the other managers to agree with your choice.

Learner A: Your company sells expensive sports cars. You are about to meet a potential customer from overseas, and your job is to look after him/her until a salesperson is free to discuss the cars. Introduce yourself and make small talk.

Learner B: You are extremely wealthy, and are currently enjoying a holiday in a foreign city. You are walking along the road when you see a showroom full of sports cars. Since it is your birthday next week, you decide to go into the showroom and perhaps buy yourself a new car.

Learner A: You work for a small company in the centre of town. It is 4 p.m. You are scheduled to meet one of your colleagues in half an hour, in order to discuss a project you have been working on together. Unfortunately, you have just found out that there is an urgent need to meet with a supplier in order to sort out a delivery problem, which will take at least two hours. Call your colleague, and postpone the meeting. Luckily, you are free all day tomorrow, and you know your colleague is too.

Learner B: You work for a small company in the centre of town. You are happy because your boss has just agreed that you can go on holiday tomorrow, for two weeks, and you have taken advantage of a special offer to buy some really cheap flight tickets. It is already 4 p.m., and you need to pick up the tickets before the shop shuts at 5.30. All you have to do beforehand is have a brief meeting, scheduled for 4.30, with one of your colleagues about a project you have been working on together. The phone rings. Answer it.

Chapter 6

A Process: 1, 3; Genre: 2, 4, 5.

B The activities are independent, and can be done in any order, depending on the group's needs. Other activities might include focusing on other words and expressions, looking at more emails, and getting learners to write their own emails.

C This is a *confidentiality agreement* (see Chapter 2, page 17). The text might be adapted in any number of ways, such as creating gap-fill exercises, replacing words with each other, focusing on collocations and/or useful expressions (see also Chapter 4, on using authentic materials).

Chapter 7

A Factors which will need to be considered in all cases include the learner's aims, ability, time available, as well as the availability of suitable materials.

B You might suggest that he buys some self-study materials, and works through them. In the case of difficulty, he should feel free to telephone (although you might wish to set time constraints on this!) or email for help. An alternative is for him to use the time to revise work already done, and for you to supply supplementary materials as appropriate. A third option is for him to use the chance to practise writing skills; he could send you regular reports on his project, for example, which you could then correct and send back. You might even agree on a regular contact schedule.

C You have various options, but could start by identifying useful websites, and then creating different activities appropriate to the level of the learners (e.g. comprehension exercises). But, since there is no extra money available, you should not overload yourself with extra work. One way to deal with this is to get the students to set up the activities; these can be checked by you before being passed on to the other students.

D Web quests are ideal in this sort of situation (see page 108).

E **Possible questions might include:** What are the aims of the course? What sorts of materials and activities are being used? How do learners know what they are supposed to be doing? How is feedback given? Are there any problems with the technology?

Chapter 8

A The basic problem was that the teacher assumed that he was the expert, ignoring the fact that the learners had considerable experience which could have been utilized. He also attempted to use materials without adapting them to the needs of the group.

B Different learners have different learning styles, and some activities lead nicely into others; this will also influence planning. Main advantages and disadvantages include:

Lectures
Advantages: Trainer is in control, it is possible to transfer a large quantity of (theoretical) information, good for large groups, can be tailored to suit a particular group
Disadvantages: Can be boring and impersonal, learners are passive, lockstep approach does not adapt to needs of individual learners
Role-plays
Advantages: Personal, learners learn by doing, learners are required to analyse situations and make decisions in real time

Disadvantages: Can be difficult with large groups, may embarrass learners or reduce confidence, learners may not take seriously

Critical incidents

Advantages: Learners are required to analyse situations and produce possible solutions, personal involvement

Disadvantages: Can be seen as irrelevant or simplistic, can be difficult to use with large groups

Discussions

Advantages: Learners are required to put forward and defend opinions, flexible

Disadvantages: Can be difficult with large groups, need to control focus or can easily become irrelevant

Films

Advantages: Can bring a sort of 'real-life' to the classroom, possible to transfer a large quantity of (theoretical) information, possible to replay situations

Disadvantages: Can be difficult to get hold of the right films, learners are passive, learners may not identify with film's characters or story

C   The answer depends on the teacher's own knowledge and experience of China, and also on the learner's own intercultural competence, but the focus will need to be on learning about China. Activities will depend on resources available, but may include reading articles and watching films about China. The teacher may also be able to arrange meetings with colleagues who have appropriate experience, or even with Chinese English speakers.

D   The answer is similar to C's, but with the focus on the *computer gaming industry*, rather than on *China*. Ideally, the learner should be given the chance to rehearse the presentation with someone from the computer gaming industry.

Chapter 9

A   The notion of triangulation is important here (see Chapter 9, page 124). See also Chapter 4, pages 43–46.

B   The main factors are cost, location, and facilities. See also Chapter 3, pages 41–42.

C   Open exercise, but the list on page 134 provides a useful starting point.

D   Your first task might be to play for time – a few minutes is not really enough time to prepare a test which might affect someone's career. If you have no choice, you should try and find out as much as possible about the sorts of discourses (spoken and written) that the applicant might face, possibly by making a quick phone call to the relevant department, and role-play some situations with him or her (see task-based assessment, Chapter 2, page 21, and Chapter 9, page 126).

E   Open exercise.

Chapter notes and further reading

The following references and notes, including suggestions for further reading, are arranged by chapter. The relevant page number is shown on the left. Where a book is mentioned more than once, the full details are only given once, after which only the author and date are given.

Chapter 1

1 Other useful introductions to teaching business English are: Brieger, N (1997) *Teaching Business English Handbook*, York, York Associates Publications; Donna, S (2000) *Teach Business English*, Cambridge University Press; Ellis, M & Johnson, C (1994) *Teaching Business English*, Oxford University Press, and Friedenberg, J *et al.* (2003) *Effective Practices in Workplace Language Training: Guidelines for Providers of Workplace English Language Training Services*, TESOL. A useful place to network with other business English teachers is IATEFL's BE Special Interest Group (see http://www.besig.org).

4 **1-to-1:** see Wilberg, P (1987) *One to One: A Teachers' Handbook*, LTP.

6 **ESP:** see Dudley-Evans, T & St John, MJ (1998) *Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A Multi-disciplinary Approach*, Cambridge University Press.

7 **English as an international language:** see MacKay, SL (2002) *Teaching English as an International Language*, Oxford University Press.

8 **Communicative competence:** see Hedge, T (2000) *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom*, Oxford University Press, especially Chapter 2.
   Lexis and Grammar: see Biber, D, Johansson, S, Leech, G, Conrad, S & Finegan, E (1999) *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*, Longman. For more on lexis and grammar, see Willis, D (2003) *Rules, Patterns and Words: Grammar and Lexis in English Language Teaching*, Cambridge University Press; and Lewis, M (ed.) (2000) *Teaching Collocation: Further Developments in the Lexical Approach*, LTP.

9 **Discourse:** see Koester, A (2004) *The Language of Work*, Routledge; and Holmes, J & Stubbe, M (2003) *Power and Politeness in the Workplace*, Pearson.

10 **Conversation analysis:** a good introduction is Hutchby, I & Wooffitt, R (1998) *Conversation Analysis*, Polity Press.

11 The telephone conversation opening sequence is adapted from Hutchby, I (2001) *Conversation and Technology: From the Telephone to the Internet*, Polity Press, page 96. A classic discussion of workplace talk is Drew, P & Heritage, J (eds) (1992) *Talk at Work*, Cambridge University Press.
   Culture: Hofstede, G & Hofstede, GE (2005) *Cultures and organisations: Software of the mind*, McGraw-Hill; and Trompenaars, F (1993) *Riding the waves of culture: Understanding Cultural Diversity in Business*, Nicholas Brealey, page 6.
   Iceberg model: see Gibson, R (2002) *Intercultural Business Communication*, Oxford University Press, page 7.

13 **CLT strong and weak forms:** see Ellis, R (2003) *Task-based Language Learning and Teaching*, Oxford University Press, page 28. For more information on teaching methodology see Richards, JC, & Renandya, WA (eds) (2002) *Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice*, Cambridge University Press.
   OHE: Lewis, M (1993) *The Lexical Approach*, LTP, page 56.
   ESA: Harmer, J (1998) *How to Teach English*, Longman, Chapter 4.
   TBL: see Ellis (2003).

Chapter 2

15 **Needs analysis:** Dudley-Evans & St John (1998), especially Chapter 4; Richards, JC (2001) *Curriculum Development in Language Teaching*, Cambridge University Press, especially Chapters 3 and 4; and Ellis & Johnson (1994) Part Two. A more comprehensive example of a needs analysis is Hagan, S (ed.) (1999) *Business Communication Across Borders – A Study of Language Use and Practice in European Companies*, Languages National Training Organisation.
    Language audit: see Reeves, N, & Wright, C (1996) *Linguistic Auditing – A Guide to Identifying Foreign Language Communication Needs in Corporations*, Multilingual Matters.

22 **CEF (Common European Framework):** the full framework can be downloaded at:
    http://www.culture2.coe.int/portfolio/documents_intro/common_framework.html.

23 **ACTFL (American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages):** see http://www.actfl.org/public/articles/Guidelines.pdf.

24 **Learning styles:** see Hedge (2000), especially Chapter 1.
    NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming): see http://www.nlp.com.
    MI theory: see Gardner, H (1999) *Intelligence Reframed. Multiple intelligences for the 21st century*, Basic Books.

Chapter 3

32 **Course design:** in addition to the books already mentioned in Chapter 2 above, Kathleen Graves's collection of articles gives useful insights and advice; see Graves, K (ed.) (1996) *Teachers as Course Developers*, Cambridge University Press.

36 Powell, M (2002) *In-company Intermediate*, Macmillan.

Chapter 4

48 **Materials development:** a useful collection of articles on many aspects of materials development is Tomlinson, B (ed.) (2003) *Developing Materials for Language Teaching*, Continuum. See Ellis & Johnson (1994), Part Three, for more on materials for BE teaching.

49 **Language corpora:** an introduction to using corpora in language teaching is Hunston, S (2002) *Corpora in Applied Linguistics*, Cambridge University Press. Easily accessible corpora on the Internet are http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk (the British National Corpus) and http://www.cobuild.collins.co.uk (the Bank of English). An excellent example of using corpora to analyse business English is Mike Nelson's business English lexis site at:
    http://users.utu.fi/micnel/business_english_lexis_site.htm

54 Cotton, D, Falvey, D, Kent, S (2002) *Market Leader Pre-Intermediate*, Longman, page 55.
    Naunton, J (2002) *Head for Business: Upper intermediate Student's Book*, Oxford University Press, pages 127 & 138.

58 Powell, M, Martinez, R, & Jillett, R (2004) *New Business Matters Coursebook*, Thomson Heinle, page 94.

Chapter 5

64 Tannen, D (1995) *Talking from 9 to 5 Woman and Men in the Workplace: Language, Sex and Power*, Avon, page 64.

77 'Phases of Negotiation', in *Managing Strategic Relationships: The Key to Business Success*, Greenhalgh, L (quoted in *Negotiation*, 4th edn, Lewicki, R et al, McGraw Hill, page 52).

79 Powell, M (2002).

Chapter 6

87 Littlejohn, A (2000) *Company to Company Teacher's Book* 3rd edn, Cambridge University Press, page 60.
More on Incoterms, including a full list, at
http://www.iccwbo.org/index_incoterms.asp

92 **European CV:** http://www.uknrp.org.uk/Pages/European_CV
Microsoft résumé template:
http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates/default.aspx

Chapter 7

101 **Authoring software:** Clarity (http://www.clarity.com.hk/);
Hot Potatoes (http://web.uvic.ca/hrd/halfbaked/).
Worksheet example from http://www.e4b.de.

102 **Internet and business English teaching:** see Barrett, B & Sharma, P (2003) *The Internet and Business English*, Summertown.
IATEFL's BESIG (http://www.besig.org).
Google (http://www.google.com),
Yahoo (http://www.yahoo.com).
http://www.bized.ac.uk.

103 Screenshot from http://www.business.com.

105 PEAK English (http://www.peakenglish.com).
BBC site (http://www.bbc.co.uk).

106 Thinkmap (http://www.visualthesaurus.com).

107 Screenshot from http://www.oup.com.
Longman Web Dictionary (http://www.ldoceonline.com).

108 **Web quests:** see http://webquest.sdsu.edu.

111 Oxford Wordsmith Tools (http://www.lexically.net/wordsmith).
CUseeMe (http://www.cuseeme.com).

Chapter 8

112 **Intercultural Training:** see Landis, D, Bennett, JM, & Bennett, MJ (eds) (2004) *Handbook of Intercultural Training* (3rd edn) Sage and Moran, PR (2001) *Teaching Culture: Perspectives in Practice*, Heinle and Heinle.
Kipling, R *The Stranger* in *Songs from Books* (1913).

113 **Dimensions:** these dimensions come from a variety of sources, including Hall, E (1959) *The Silent Language*, Anchor; Hofstede, G & Hofstede, GJ (2005); and Trompenaars, F (1993) *Riding the Waves of Culture*. For a brief overview see Gibson (2002), Chapter 2.

116 The diagrams are taken from Trompenaars (1993), pages 67–68.
Activities: the activities in this chapter are largely adaptations of, or influenced by, activities I have seen done by other teachers at teacher training workshops and conferences over the years, including James Chamberlain, Sabrina Gerland, Robert Gibson, Vicki Hollett, Donal Lynch, Philip O'Connor, Adrian Pilbeam, and Shonda Rae Kohlhoff.

Chapter 9

123 **Kirkpatrick:** see Phillips. JJ, & Stone, RD, (2002) *How to Measure Training Results*, McGraw-Hill.

124 Summative, formative, and illuminative categories from Richards (2001), Chapter 9.

125 **Testing business speaking skills:** see Douglas, D (2000) *Assessing Languages for Specific Purposes*, Cambridge University Press, and Fulcher, G (2003) *Testing Second Language Speaking*, Longman.

127 **Commercially available tests:** more information on common business English tests can be found at the following websites:
TOEIC (http://www.ets.org/toeic).
BEC (http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/bec.htm).

129 SEFIC (http://www.lccieb.com).

130 Matching example from *International Business English Unit 5* test sheet (http://uk.cambridge.org/elt/nibe/teachers/intro.htm).

131 **Open-ended example:** see *Spoken English Test for Business* (Pitman) at http://www.pitmanqualifications.com.
Using computers: an example of a CAT is BULATS; see:
http://www.bulats.org/

132 Gap-fill example from Phillips, A, & Phillips, T (1996) *Business Objectives Teacher's Book*, Oxford University Press, page 76.
Information transfer example from *Cambridge BEC Vantage: Practice Tests from the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate* (2002), Cambridge University Press, page 29.

133 Comprehension example from Arbogast et al (2001) *TOEIC Official Test-Preparation Guide*, Thomson Peterson's, page 148.
Error correction example from Taylor, L (1996) *International Express Pre-Intermediate Student's Book*, Oxford University Press, page 76.

138 **Business English teacher qualifications:** two commonly recognised BE initial training certificates are the LCCI Cert FTBE and the LCCI Cert TEB. York Associates also offer the CLTC.

Index

Other books in the
How to ... series:

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- guidance on testing and assessing learners
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